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New York

President: Mr. Udovenko . . . . . (Ukraine)

The meeting was called to order at 3.05 p.m.

Agenda item 9 (*continued*)

General debate

The President: The first speaker this afternoon is the Minister for Foreign Affairs and Cooperation of Guinea-Bissau, His Excellency Mr. Fernando Delfim da Silva, on whom I now call.

Mr. da Silva (Guinea-Bissau) (*spoke in Portuguese; interpretation from French text furnished by the delegation*): Allow me to congratulate you, Sir, on behalf of my country, Guinea-Bissau, on your election to the presidency of the General Assembly and to reiterate our confidence in your ability to conduct the work of this session successfully. You can rest assured of the willingness of the delegation of Guinea-Bissau to cooperate with you.

I should also like to pay a well-deserved tribute to your predecessor, Ambassador Razali Ismail of Malaysia, for the innovative and constructive manner in which he carried out his task.

Congratulations are also due the Secretary-General, Mr. Kofi Annan, who, since his assumption of the Organization's highest office, has shouldered his important responsibilities with great resolve, *inter alia* with regard to United Nations reform. We encourage him to continue his work with the same dynamic spirit in order better to adapt our Organization to the current and future needs of a world in flux.

The General Assembly is meeting at a time when the Organization is going through a period of complex transition that has brought several questions to the fore. Guinea-Bissau is nevertheless convinced of the ability of the Organization and of Member States to define new policies and to develop suitable structures to deal with the new challenges that are being posed by international problems.

During the observance of the fiftieth anniversary of the United Nations the leaders of the entire world solemnly reaffirmed the irreplaceable nature of the Organization's role as well as the need to reform and modernize the United Nations. The historic Declaration adopted at that time should continue to form the basis of the Organization's work, laying down as it does a framework for global action based on the principles and ideals of the Charter.

Accordingly, we welcome the important initiatives for reform taken by the Secretary-General, which in my delegation's view are deserving of the support of Member States.

My delegation believes that the expansion and democratization of the Security Council are also priority matters. That important body must reflect, both in its composition and in its decisions, the concerns of all Members and should have a more transparent basis and a more equitable geographical representation.

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Therefore, in keeping with the Harare Declaration of Heads of State and Government of the countries members of the Organization of African Unity (OAU), we believe that Africa should have two permanent seats in the Security Council, with the same privileges as the current members.

Similarly, we believe that the candidacies of Japan, Germany and Brazil to be permanent members of the Security Council deserve the serious attention of Guinea-Bissau, without prejudice to other proposals before us for consideration.

The United Nations has played a decisive role in international affairs since its founding. However, the challenges we are facing at the threshold of the twenty-first century are unprecedented and call for greater efforts from the Organization and all its Members, particularly in seeking the solution to financial problems, a sine qua non for effective progress in the reform process.

Despite the Organization's commitment to international peace and security, conflicts and fratricidal wars continue in various parts of the world, causing loss of life, massive displacements of population and floods of refugees. Africa, unfortunately, continues to furnish tragic examples of such scourges. The seriousness of these crises on our continent prompted the Security Council to devote a ministerial meeting to such problems on 25 September of this year in an effort to analyse their causes and propose suitable solutions.

In addition to conflicts in Angola, Burundi, Rwanda and Somalia, there are new tensions and crises in Sierra Leone, the Republic of the Congo and the Central African Republic.

In respect to Angola, a country with which Guinea-Bissau enjoys a relationship of deep friendship, we welcome the progress made there towards restoring peace and achieving national reconciliation, and we encourage UNITA to make the efforts necessary to bring to completion the tasks set forth in the Lusaka Protocol.

In Burundi, the Republic of the Congo, the Central African Republic and Somalia dialogue must prevail in the search for solutions to the problems that affect those countries.

In Sierra Leone, the United Nations — the Security Council in particular — must support the efforts of the Economic Community of West African States and OAU to restore the democratically elected Government.

In Liberia, we welcome the holding of free and fai elections and the return to peace. We urge th international community to continue to provide aid fo reconstruction and the consolidation of peace an democracy in that country.

Turning to Western Sahara, Guinea-Bissa welcomes the recent agreement concluded between th various parties and hopes that this new understanding wi lead to a definitive solution to this question through th holding of a referendum on self-determination.

The sanctions imposed on Libya by the Securit Council in 1992 seriously affect innocent people. Guinea Bissau encourages the parties concerned to seek, throug negotiations, a just solution to that question. The join proposals of OAU and the League of Arab States meri the attention of the international community.

Recent events in the Middle East have weakened th peace process. We urge the State of Israel and th Palestinian Authority to continue their dialogue to restor a climate of confidence, which is so essential to th establishment of a just, lasting and comprehensive peac in the region.

We are also concerned at the slow pace of th implementation of the peace agreement in Bosnia an Herzegovina, and we appeal to the various parties t show greater determination to resolve the conflict.

In East Timor, we continue to support th negotiations conducted under the auspices of th Secretary-General to find a just and definitive solution t this question.

The embargo imposed on Cuba continues seriousl to affect that country's people and development process We appeal to the parties to take the necessary step towards a definitive and satisfactory solution to thi problem.

On behalf of our Government, we should also lik to reiterate our conviction that the Republic of China o Taiwan deserves to regain its rightful place in the Unite Nations on the basis of respect for the principle o universality and the sovereign equality of States. Th Republic of China on Taiwan, a democratic country o over 20 million people that has made enormous progres in the economic and social field and with regard t respect for basic human rights, is today a reality tha cannot be ignored. The readmission of the Republic o

China to the United Nations and to all its specialized agencies would be an important factor for peace, stability and international cooperation.

Mindful of the fact that the United Nations, and the Security Council in particular, play an essential role in the maintenance of international peace and security, we attach special importance to regional bodies with respect to conflict prevention and resolution.

In our subregion, the Economic Community of West African States has, with unprecedented success, been managing the crisis in Liberia through the establishment and deployment of the ECOWAS Monitoring Group. The steps undertaken through the Mechanism for Conflict Prevention, Management and Resolution of the Organization of African Unity (OAU) deserve special mention. Given the magnitude and complexity of the problems to be resolved, that organ needs increased support from the international community to complete its mission.

In this context, we believe that any approach to strengthening the capacities of African countries to prevent, manage and resolve conflicts must be supported. Thus, we welcome with interest the joint initiative of the United States, France and Great Britain in this area under the aegis of OAU.

Guinea-Bissau welcomes the adoption in Oslo of a draft convention for the complete elimination of anti-personnel landmines and urges all countries to accede to it so that it may enter into force as soon as possible.

The intolerable persistence of poverty in the world, particularly in Africa, requires the ongoing mobilization of the international community and the elaboration within international bodies of coherent policies to confront the major problems of development. Given the fact that Africa has more least developed countries than any other continent in the world, the General Assembly's recent adoption of the Agenda for Development is of the greatest interest to us.

Africa continues to suffer the negative effects of the problems of external debt, deteriorating terms of trade, difficult access for its products to international markets and decreased investment. Moreover, the effects of the globalization of the economy and the drop in official development assistance have reduced the capacity of African countries to tackle socio-economic problems successfully. The initiatives of the Paris Club, the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund to provide debt relief — initiatives that have already benefited some African countries — meet our concerns and we hope that Guinea-Bissau will soon be able to profit by them.

Respect for and the full exercise of fundamental human rights are factors for freedom, peace and guaranteed internal stability. Guinea-Bissau, which recognizes the importance of good governance, pluralistic democracy and a state of law, continues to work for the preservation of values intrinsic to the dignity of the individual and his full, harmonious development. In this regard, we wish to congratulate Mrs. Mary Robinson on her timely nomination to the post of United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights. We wish her every success in the performance of her duties and call on all Member States to lend her the support she needs.

The rational use of our world's natural resources and environmental protection are responsibilities which, to varying degrees, fall to all mankind. Guinea-Bissau has, together with its partners, defined a strategy for sustainable development that respects ecological balances. The disappointing results of the review of the implementation of Agenda 21 at last June's special session of the General Assembly is clear proof that the international community must be much more committed to defining agreed policies for environmental protection.

The achievement of the ideals of the United Nations to which our peoples aspire, the need to reform and modernize our Organization, and international cooperative efforts are all the subjects of our collective thinking and the inspiration of our ongoing commitment. Indeed, given the challenges of the late twentieth century, our Organization continues to embody the greatest hopes of our peoples for a future of progress, well-being, social justice and understanding among all peoples.

As Mr. João Bernardo Vieira, President of the Republic of Guinea-Bissau, said during the celebration of the United Nations fiftieth anniversary:

> "I would call for greater ... coordination of our efforts in order to forge a world Organization capable of preserving future generations from the scourge of war and to give the poorest and most helpless true reasons for hope, thus safeguarding the common interests of mankind." [*Official Records of the General Assembly, Fiftieth Session, Plenary Meetings*, 36th meeting, p.9]

The President: I now give the floor to the Minister for Foreign Affairs of Bhutan, His Excellency Mr. Dawa Tsering.

Mr. Tsering (Bhutan): I have the honour to convey to all representatives the warm greetings and good wishes of His Majesty Jigme Singye Wangchuck, King of Bhutan, for the success of the fifty-second session of the United Nations General Assembly.

May I express, Sir, my heartfelt congratulations on your election to the high office of the presidency of the General Assembly. We are confident that with your vast personal experience and in-depth knowledge of the United Nations you will lead our deliberations in this important session to a fruitful conclusion.

I would like to express our deep appreciation to Ambassador Razali Ismail of Malaysia for the bold and innovative manner in which he led the fifty-first session of the General Assembly.

I would like to take this opportunity to pay a special tribute to the Secretary-General, Mr. Kofi Annan, for his dynamic leadership of our Organization. I wish to congratulate him on his comprehensive report on the reform of the United Nations and also to express our appreciation to the Executive Coordinator for Reform and his team for their valuable contribution.

This session of the General Assembly has been widely regarded as a session for the reform of the United Nations. I shall therefore confine my remarks to this subject. The question of United Nations reform is not a new issue and has been the subject of ongoing discussions. We share the view that concrete steps must be taken this year so that the feeling of uncertainty can be put behind us and we can concentrate on other important challenges that confront our Organization.

Before we embark on the task of reforming the United Nations it is important that we first understand what the United Nations means to different Member States. The United Nations is certainly unparalleled in history as a forum for international dialogue and cooperation, as well as for the maintenance of international peace and security. However, for many of the larger Members it remains but one of several means of pursuing their national interests. For smaller Member countries, however, the United Nations remains the primary Organization for the protection and expression of their sovereignty. Many of them also rely heavily on the United Nations for their economic and social advancement. Any reform of the United Nations must therefore take into account the needs and aspirations of the majority of its Members, which are small developing countries. The United Nations must be able to protect the political independence of its smaller Members and support their social and economic development in order to enable them to meet their aspirations for peace and development without undue pressures or interference from outside.

The proposal for reform submitted by the Secretary-General is significant in that he has not only sought the views of Member States but has also taken into account the perspective of the United Nations staff, for the changes would have a direct bearing on their functions and responsibilities. In our view, this effort to involve Members States as well as the United Nations staff will provide a congenial atmosphere in which to discuss reforms and their subsequent implementation.

With regard to the reforms, there are clearly areas which fall within the mandate of the Secretary-General. It is our view that reforms which are already moving ahead in some areas must be allowed to do so. We find merit in clustering together various divisions within the United Nations Secretariat in the core areas of peace and security, humanitarian affairs, economic and social affairs and human rights. We also find the various coordination and planning mechanisms being put in place among the new broad clusters necessary and useful.

We look forward to receiving from the Secretary-General his report on the measures he is taking to implement the organizational changes which are within his mandate. While the General Assembly and some of the existing consultative mechanisms exist and will no doubt be used for interaction with the Secretariat, there should be mechanisms by which the general membership can interact with the newly formed divisions.

The new post of Deputy Secretary-General is necessary in our view, given the formidable number of responsibilities that the Secretary-General currently has to shoulder. The role of the Deputy Secretary-General should, however, be clearly defined in the larger interests of the Organization.

The question of refocusing the work of the General Assembly itself is an interesting proposal which we fully support. The long debates in the Assembly, as well as in numerous Committees, and the large number of issues and resolutions, are well beyond the capacity of many of

the smaller Member countries to handle. We support the idea of dealing with thematic issues, both within the plenary and the Committees, during the annual sessions.

We also support the view that the follow-up to all global conferences should be properly tied to the work of the General Assembly. The resolutions and other decisions adopted during the General Assembly must be organized in such a manner that they will have a direct bearing on the work of the Secretariat, providing both guidance and direction.

The proposed Development Group that has been constituted, bringing greater coordination of the three key United Nations development agencies — namely, the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) and the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA) — is of special interest to the majority of small developing countries to which the activities of these agencies provide significant support. It must be recognized that the coordination among these three agencies must support the ongoing programmes which these agencies have arrived at with individual countries and that the changes should be brought about without any disruption to the current programmes, both in financial and programming terms.

As a country which has benefited greatly from the activities of UNDP, UNICEF and UNFPA, we express our gratitude to these and other United Nations bodies and specialized agencies for their assistance to my country. The experience of Bhutan and many smaller developing countries clearly indicates that there is a continued role for these United Nations bodies and agencies. It is our hope that with better coordination within the Development Group and field-level implementation of their activities there will be enhanced financial support by the donor community.

The proposal by the Secretary-General to have a high-level ministerial commission to review the work of other United Nations agencies and their relationship with the General Assembly and the Secretariat is timely. The work of the specialized agencies is extremely important, and it is time their methods of work and their activities were reviewed so that all United Nations programmes are better synchronized.

All the efforts to reform and revitalize the United Nations will not be possible if the United Nations does not have a sound financial position. The financial health of the United Nations must be restored. All members must work earnestly towards meeting this objective. We welcome the Secretary-General's proposal to create a revolving credit fund to meet the Organization's funding. However, the primary requirement must be met from the assessed contributions of Member States. In this regard, it is our view that the negotiations on the scale of assessments must proceed and be resolved at an early date in a manner that is acceptable to all Member States. We also firmly believe that all Member States must meet their financial obligations to the Organization through the unconditional payment of their assessed dues in full and on time. The United Nations must also institute more dynamic means of fund management, including utilization of the financial market in a prudent manner. All legal restrictions to such management should be reviewed.

One of the most important issues relating to the reform of the United Nations remains the membership of the Security Council. It is our view that the discussions on this issue, emanating from complex and fundamentally inequitable premises, have led to the current difficulties. However, the continued status quo does not benefit the vast majority of Member States. Bhutan fully supports the Non-Aligned Movement's position that there must be expansion of the permanent membership to include the developed and developing countries and that there should be additional non-permanent seats. The expansion must take into account the new security needs and the objective criteria, of who would best be able to shoulder the new responsibilities. We believe that on the basis of objective criteria, Japan, as one of the foremost economic and political powers in the world today, qualifies for permanent membership. Among developing countries, India's case merits serious consideration for permanent membership due to its massive population — one out of nearly six people on our planet is an Indian — and its great economic potential, in addition to the fact that India has played an active role in all United Nations activities. Discussion on the expansion must continue, and we should not be deterred by the complex nature of the subject. We remain confident that an early and equitable solution can be found.

It is our hope that the reform of the United Nations and the renewal of the United Nations can be completed in the two remaining years of this century, so that during the millennium session of the General Assembly, in the year 2000, we can concentrate on the vision and aspirations of mankind for the twenty-first century.

The President: I now call on the Minister for Foreign Affairs of Suriname, His Excellency Mr. Errol Glenn Snijders.

Mr. Snijders (Suriname): Allow me to begin by congratulating you, Sir, on behalf of the delegation of Suriname, on your election to the presidency of the fifty-second session of the General Assembly. I am convinced that under your wise and able guidance our deliberations will be fruitful. May I express our appreciation for the excellent manner in which your predecessor, Ambassador Razali Ismail, presided over the fifty-first session of the General Assembly.

I also take this opportunity to convey our profound admiration of and gratitude for the dynamic leadership of the Secretary-General, Mr. Kofi Annan, in pursuance of the noble objectives of this unique world body in this era in which new challenges and opportunities face humankind. We salute his efforts to bring our Organization more in line with the pressing demands of our time.

When we express our feelings of solidarity with the less fortunate of the world, our sympathy also goes out to the Government and the people of the sister island of Montserrat as they suffer the consequences of a geologic disaster in these dismal days of their history. The important support that the Caribbean Community (CARICOM) countries, within their limited possibilities, have given to Montserrat to help alleviate the pain merits recognition and is worth following. I therefore seize this opportunity to appeal to other countries to fulfil their moral obligations to our brothers and sisters in need.

Within the context of an increasingly integrated and complex global economic system of production and distribution, trade liberalization and globalization of financial markets, the major thrust of the development strategy of the Government of the Republic of Suriname lies in the revitalization and strengthening of production and export capacity as the main engines of growth while maintaining financial and monetary stability.

In response to the need to diversify the export base of the economy, a good deal of impetus was given this year to the expansion of the mining sector by the recent opening of an oil refinery that will enable my country to meet domestic demands for heavy oil, by new gold-mining operations and by the commercial exploitation of other mineral deposits. Furthermore, we have initiated the construction of two important bridges. Together with the rehabilitation of vital infrastructure, including access roads in the coastal area and to the interior of the country and the operation of a ferry service with our neighbouring country, the cooperative Republic of Guyana, these bridges will offer new opportunities for trade, house construction, transport, tourism and employment in Suriname.

It is often said that progress in building lasting democracies and stronger market economies is increasingly threatened by slow growth, weak institutions, poverty and wealth inequality. Persistent economic hardships for the majority of the people can likewise damage the credibility of democratic Governments. The struggle against poverty and social injustice is therefore the greatest challenge to the Government of Suriname.

In our ceaseless struggle as a small nation to achieve people-centred development goals, the present Government, within the international constraints of sustainable development and environmental protection, will continue its endeavours to increase domestic efficiency and international competitiveness in agriculture, production, manufacturing and export, as well as to strengthen the institutions of local entrepreneurship, with a view to ensuring political stability and fostering equitable economic growth.

Bearing in mind that which has been referred to as the dark side of the globalization process, and with a view to avoiding marginalization and creating outsiders to the global economy, it is imperative that we continue to recognize the small, fragile and vulnerable economies of the Caribbean, including Suriname, and of other regions in the world. This should guarantee that they will be given special treatment during a transitional period in which they will still require exceptions, waivers and other transitional arrangements in the broader context of international trade liberalization and economic integration.

Hence the Surinamese Government attaches special significance to the May 1997 Bridgetown Declaration of Principles on Caribbean Community-United States cooperation in responding to the challenges that the new millennium poses for our region, and it is looking forward to an expeditious implementation of the Plan of Action appended thereto. We also attach great importance to the timely implementation of the Programme of Action for the Sustainable Development of Small Island Developing States and are looking forward to the 1998 review session of the Commission on Sustainable Development on outstanding chapters and issues of the Programme of Action.

The Government of Suriname welcomes the call of the United Nations Commission on Narcotic Drugs for a renewed and concerted international commitment to a forward-looking drug strategy for the twenty-first century and, to that end, the convocation of a special session of the General Assembly in June 1998. That session will prepare a global drug-control strategy and new ways to promote international and regional coo,eration in the fight against the worldwide drug problem that undermines in particular the economic and social prospects of many small developing nations.

While Suriname cannot be considered a drug-producing country, it is afflicted by this scourge through producers from outside the country who misuse its territory as a transit point for drugs bound for other countries, where the availability and extensive use of drugs is creating a huge, profitable market that threatens the well-being of so many and feeds the greed of but a few.

To demonstrate our resolve to eradicate this evil from our territory, we will join with neighbouring countries to coordinate our strategies and efforts. For that purpose Suriname will convene, at the beginning of 1998 and in concert with Guyana, Brazil, France and Venezuela, an international conference on defining strategies and actions against the misuse and illicit trafficking of drugs. We appeal to those who are also committed to this struggle to assist us in this endeavour.

Reflecting on our special session on the implementation of Agenda 21, the Government of Suriname applauds the adoption in July of this year of the Programme for the Further Implementation of Agenda 21, including the statement of commitment by Member countries. We expect the next comprehensive review of its implementation in the year 2002 to demonstrate greater measurable progress in achieving sustainable development.

The Government of Suriname feels concern about the issue of finance for sustainable development. Since Rio 1992, only four developed States have fulfilled their Agenda 21 commitment towards the target of providing 0.7 per cent of their gross national product as official development assistance. As it was agreed that for most developing countries official development assistance is still a main source of external development financing and cannot generally be replaced by private capital inflows, I should like to urge the donor community to intensify efforts to reverse the declining trend in official development assistance as we experience it today.

The situation in the Middle East continues to pose a great threat to international peace and security. The Oslo agreement of 1993, signed by the two parties, embodies the hope that a lasting solution to this conflict is within reach, since it establishes the basis for a lasting peace in the Middle East. We feel that the peace process must be carried on urgently, with a well-defined timetable. We therefore support the co-sponsors of the peace process in their effort to bring the parties back to the negotiating table with a view to securing durable peace in the Middle East.

Allow me to make a few remarks on the important issues of the reform and strengthening of the United Nations and of more equitable representation in the Security Council. Since its birth, our Organization has grown from 5 to 185 Member States, but the Security Council still reflects the world as it was in 1945. The Government of Suriname therefore underscores the need for an expansion of, and a more equitable representation in, the membership of the Security Council.

The reform of the Security Council should not only make the Council's membership more representative and more legitimate but should also enhance its transparency and openness towards other Member States and non-members in order to convey its important messages in an amplified and more effective manner. Hence we welcome the recent measures taken by the Council to enhance its transparency.

The present Government of Suriname takes the position that the countries of the Caribbean and Latin America should be included in any agreed expansion of the Council, within the context of the principles of equitable geographic distribution and the sovereign equality of States. The reform should not result in discriminatory treatment between the developed and the developing countries. We furthermore consider as integral parts of Security Council reform its expansion, the reform of its working methods and the issue of the veto. The veto should preferably be restricted to issues falling under Chapter VII of our Charter.

Increased globalization and the emergence of new challenges and threats require closer cooperation between States at a global level. Within this context, it is of utmost importance to reaffirm and maintain the role of the United Nations as a major actor in cooperation between States, especially development cooperation. In this light, my Government welcomes the initiative of the Secretary-General to propose a comprehensive reform

programme to the General Assembly which is geared towards strengthening the efficiency of the Secretariat and fixing a stronger focus on economic and social development issues.

The Government of Suriname supports in general the reform proposals of the Secretary-General and their key elements. These reform proposals as a whole represent a timely and welcome initiative, given the fact that in today's world the need has progressively increased for global common action on a number of pressing problems, such as the eradication of poverty, humanitarian emergencies, refugee problems, climate change and desertification, diminishing official development assistance funding, drugs, nuclear disarmament, the implementation of Agenda 21, democracy and the maintenance of peace and security in various regions of the world.

All this calls for a stronger United Nations to promote a renewed multilateral cooperation based on common interests and shared responsibility. We must empower the United Nations now so that it can confront the global challenges of the twenty-first century.

One of the best ways to re-establish trust in the United Nations is to enhance the impact of United Nations development activities at the country level. In this regard the Surinamese Government endorses the proposal to establish a "United Nations House".

In closing, I wish to reiterate that the Government of the Republic of Suriname is committed to contributing to the ongoing process of reform of our Organization.

We see the reform proposals of the Secretary-General as a first step in the right direction, although much more is left to be done. We feel that the United Nations system should be made stronger, more effective and more efficient in order to meet the priorities set by all its Members — not just the priorities of the economically strong and the militarily powerful but, especially, the priorities of the weak and vulnerable States, which should be prevented from becoming outsiders in the global economy.

The President: I call next on The Honourable Lieutenant-General Mompati S. Merafhe, MP, Minister for Foreign Affairs of Botswana.

Mr. Merafhe (Botswana): Allow me, Sir, to express to you and to your delegation our sincere congratulations on your election to the presidency of the General Assembly at its fifty-second session. As you are an experienced United Nations diplomat, we entertain great expectations of your tenure of office as President of the Assembly.

We wish also to pay tribute to the outgoing President, His Excellency Ambassador Razali Ismail of Malaysia, whose stewardship of the fifty-first session will forever be remembered for its creativity and dynamism. We wish him well and thank him and his country, Malaysia, for a job well done.

The Secretary-General, Mr. Kofi Annan, deserves in ample measure our gratitude for the professionalism he has demonstrated thus far in his leadership of the United Nations. His reports on the work of the Organization and on the wide-ranging reform of the United Nations system renew the confidence and trust we reposed in him when we elected him only nine months ago.

We live in a rapidly changing world. The past few years have witnessed an unprecedented expansion of world trade and commerce, and the trend continues unabated. National boundaries are being transcended with ease in the interaction of national economies through a process which has been christened globalization. In the international political arena, there is increasing unanimity amongst the community of nations and other global actors that narrow national interests should be superseded by universal interests.

These complex changes in the world outlook call for an enhanced role for the United Nations in international affairs lest change become brutal, especially for the developing countries. The United Nations has gained new international stature in recent years, thanks to the extirpation of the politics of paralysis of the cold-war era. "Blue Helmets" are today being deployed in situations formerly considered to be outside the range of the responsibility of the United Nations for the maintenance of international peace and security.

The United Nations has also built international consensus through a series of conferences and meetings on areas and issues as diverse as women and development, youth, the environment, human rights, ageing, population, social development and human settlements, education and health, the outcome of which will guide the thinking and actions of the international community into the next millennium. Furthermore, the United Nations has proved its capability to deal effectively with the serious threats posed by nuclear, chemical and biological weapons, a capability which is

often frustrated by a lack of political will and commitment on the part of Member States.

In short, in the present-day reality, no one country, big or small, rich or poor, weak or powerful, can exist in isolation or act unilaterally without suffering the consequences of its actions. Terrorism, drug trafficking, cross-border crime, the depletion of the ozone layer, acid rain, receding rain forests, advancing deserts, diminishing fresh-water reserves, poverty, disease and many more recognize no national boundaries; only collective action by the States Members of the Organization can arrest and reverse their advance.

The United Nations is the mother of genuine multilateralism, and it should occupy centre stage in our thinking about international relations. The heavy responsibilities reposed in the world body by present-day international realities demand that the United Nations system should undergo substantial reform if it is to respond more efficiently and effectively to the needs and concerns of its Member States and their peoples, now and in the future. The United Nations system needs to be streamlined to remove administrative bottlenecks, weed out corruption and other malpractices and eliminate duplication in the activities of its organs, agencies, programmes, funds and offices.

It is in that spirit that Botswana welcomes the recent reform initiatives of the Secretary-General as the basis for further discussion and debate on the reform process. My delegation will have occasion to pronounce itself on the various elements of the reform package in due course. At this juncture, I can only observe that Botswana is disposed to a holistic consideration of the package by the General Assembly. The reform proposals constitute a single unit, and its constituent parts should be discussed with that understanding in mind.

This means, therefore, that those elements of the package — the greatest number, we would hope — which are acceptable to the majority of delegations, or on which general consensus is attained, should be implemented forthwith. True, many of the proposals are indeed revolutionary, as the Secretary-General himself concedes, and, if approved, they would in a positive sense change permanently the way the Organization operates. The reform package is the broadest and most extensive in the history of the United Nations and, in my view, is an appropriate response to the magnitude of the clamour for reform which has echoed through the halls of this Organization and which for some time now has even threatened its very existence.

It would have been the height of absurdity for my delegation to have expected the whole reform package to be agreeable or acceptable to every delegation in this Hall, but I find the arguments and complaints from some quarters that the package does not go far enough preposterous to say the least. Reform, as the Secretary-General rightly reminds us, is not an event but a process. Reform should not and must not be apocalyptic. It cannot and must not become synonymous with the downsizing of the Organization to the extent that it would deprive it of the requisite human and material resources to render services to Member States, especially the developing countries.

Such reform would be inimical to the efficacy of the United Nations. Reform should lead to a more efficient, more effective and more relevant United Nations, that is a United Nations with a capacity to foresee and respond adequately and expeditiously to imminent disaster situations around the world and to other needs and concerns of humankind today.

The Secretary-General's reform proposals have signalled the direction to take in the reform process; it is the collaborative response of the Member States which is awaited. I believe we are all very serious about reform of the United Nations; now is the time to approve and implement those reform proposals on which there is general consensus. Our commitment, seriousness and sincerity about United Nations reform would increasingly be called into doubt if by the beginning of the fifty-third session of the Assembly we had not implemented any of the reform proposals contained in the Secretary-General's reform package.

Mr. Young (Saint Vincent and the Grenadines), Vice-President, took the Chair.

No one country, region or group of countries can arrogate to itself the right to dictate the reform agenda. What should be established is a balanced, equitable and non-discriminatory reform agenda in which the common wishes and interests of every Member State can find expression. This is the guiding principle my delegation will follow in its contribution to the ongoing reform process.

The Secretary-General's reform package is not the only momentous issue in the United Nations reform

process. Close to four years have elapsed, and the debate on Security Council reform continues without an end in sight. It is obvious that, unless we can suddenly acquire Solomonic wisdom, we are unlikely to come to a successful conclusion of this debate in another four years or even much longer. Yet there has emerged a body of thought which favours an increase in the membership of the Security Council, in both the permanent and non-permanent member categories, to reflect the configuration of today's international political realities.

Botswana was a member of the Security Council until the end of last year, and we are convinced more than ever before that the composition of the membership of the Security Council, as well as its working methods and procedures, needs reform. It is time for the debate on Security Council reform to be brought to a successful conclusion, so that all geographical regions can be equitably represented in the Council. We should not allow the debate to become sterile or degenerate into a dialogue between the deaf and the dumb.

The financial health of the Organization is another issue which remains a source of deep concern and anguish to my delegation. The United Nations cannot be expected to deliver the goods without the necessary financial lifeblood. In other words, the United Nations cannot operate on the basis of a shoestring budget and be expected to carry out the heavy responsibilities imposed on it every day by Member States. It is therefore imperative that each and every Member State should meet its financial obligations to this Organization on time, in full and without any conditionalities, and clear all its arrears as a matter of urgency.

The international community has made considerable progress in the struggle for democracy around the world since the end of the cold war. Today, peoples and nations across the spectrum of the African continent live in relative peace and tranquillity and are engaged in the reconstruction of their national economies, thanks to the emergence of a democratic culture. In spite of these positive developments, the reality is that Africa is still bedeviled by deadly conflicts.

However, we are happy to acknowledge that fighting has ceased in Liberia. The Liberian people have at long last freely chosen their leaders, and their verdict was respected.

The long-suffering and economically plundered Democratic Republic of the Congo today enjoys relative peace and security after a short but devastating crisis that ended with the overthrow of a 32-year dictatorship. The people of the Democratic Republic of Congo need the understanding and sympathy of the international community as they grapple with the reconstruction of their country.

The final settlement of the conflict in Angola continues to elude the international community, but, thank God, there has been no resumption of hostilities so far. Progress is painfully slow, due to the failure by UNITA to honour its obligations under the Lusaka Protocol, and especially its refusal to disarm and demobilize its forces. The United Nations should monitor the situation in Angola very closely to ensure that the present slow progress does not assume a state of permanence or lead to a reversal of the gains made so far under the Lusaka process.

The international community should continue to pay closer attention to the situation in Somalia and help the Somali parties hold a peace conference through which they can settle, once and for all, their long-running fratricidal conflict.

There is a renewed sense of expectation that the efforts deployed to resolve the conflict in Western Sahara will bear fruit. It is our hope and wish that the Secretary-General, through his Personal Envoy, Mr. James Baker, will achieve a breakthrough which will lead to the final settlement of the Western Sahara conflict in the very near future.

The situation in Sierra Leone is troubling. The overthrow of a democratically elected Government in Sierra Leone five months ago was a most unfortunate reversal of the political gains that had been achieved in that country. The international community has taken the correct line in making it clear that it will no longer tolerate any military dictatorships. The rejection and isolation of the military junta in Sierra Leone should serve as a warning to military leaders with similar designs that military rule is unacceptable, whatever the justification. The ballot, and not the bullet, should be the only way through which political leadership can change hands.

While the situation in the Balkans remains generally tense, there is a light at the end of the tunnel signalling the arrival of a new era of national reconciliation in the constituent States of the former Yugoslavia. The time has come for the various ethnic groups in the former

Yugoslavia to realize that none of their countries can exist as an ethnically pure State without causing political tensions and reawakening centuries-old hatreds. Their future and destinies are, fortunately or unfortunately, inextricably intertwined by reason of geography and history. They should accept their fate for what it is. Conflict and war have failed to resolve the ethnic composition of these States in the past, and are unlikely to resolve them in the future.

We salute the Secretary-General for his recent initiative which brought together the leaders of the two sides in the Cyprus conflict in New York for talks. We encourage him to continue his good offices until the parties reach a final solution to this decades old conflict.

Botswana supports the Middle East peace process. Experience has shown that peace in that complex cauldron of conflict cannot be achieved through war and bloodshed. Only painstaking and rigorous negotiations conducted in an atmosphere of give and take can lead to the desired result: the peace that everyone is yearning for in the Middle East.

We hope that the State of Israel will realize the insensitivity of the construction of new settlements on Palestinian lands. This has contributed in no small measure to the current crisis in the Middle East peace process. No effort should be spared to put the Middle East peace process back on track so that the hopes and aspirations of the ordinary peoples of that region to live together in peace as good neighbours may be realized.

We welcome the ongoing talks between the two Koreas, in which China and the United States are also participants. It is our ardent hope that the talks will lead to a decrease in political tensions in the Korean peninsula, and that the two Koreas will henceforth establish some common ground which will assist in the eventual reunification of their divided country.

I wish to welcome the recent conclusion of the Convention on the Prohibition of the Use, Stockpiling, Production and Transfer of Anti-Personnel Mines and on Their Destruction. I wish the Convention enjoyed the support of all nations. Anti-personnel mines are diabolical and cowardly instruments of warfare which indiscriminately kill and maim their unsuspecting victims. They should have been banned a long time ago, before they claimed more lives and maimed many people. It is our fervent desire that the Convention will soon enjoy the support of all Member States. It is hoped that the experience gained in the campaign for the elaboration and conclusion of this Convention will be extended to all weapons of mass destruction.

Several developing countries are still wrestling with daunting economic and social problems. The number of countries whose people still live in abject poverty and lack basic nourishment is on the rise, especially in Africa. Regrettably, multilateral assistance is declining rapidly in relation to the rising poverty in the developing countries. Only a handful of developed countries meet the agreed goal of 0.7 per cent of gross national product to official development assistance. At the same time, private capital flows have been directed to only a few countries. The United Nations funds and programmes are also unable to implement their respective mandates due to lack of resources. It is important that this trend be not only arrested but reversed through strengthened international cooperation for development.

For meaningful development to take root in the developing countries, an enabling international environment should be established which can address such issues as macroeconomic stability, more open trade regimes in developed countries, stable financial systems, reasonable debt initiatives, such as those proposed under the World Bank's Heavily Indebted Poor Countries Debt Initiative, and greater financial flows from developed countries to the developing countries. The international community must also make concerted efforts to support the development programmes of the developing countries in capacity-building, infrastructure and manpower development.

Obviously, there will be an absolute need for a turnaround in the political and economic orientation of the developed countries in favour of global prosperity if these objectives are to be realized. It is such enlightened thinking, which promises economic and political rewards to the greatest number of the Member States of the United Nations, which is absent in the development bureaucracies of many developed countries.

As always, our faith in the United Nations as a repository of the hopes and aspirations of humankind is genuine, deep-rooted and unassailable. We are a young and developing country in a troubled world — a world caught between the extremes of rampant globalization and resurgent isolationism. Our survival rests with this global Organization and its Charter, to which we pledge our unstinting commitment and loyalty.

The Acting President: I now call on the Minister for Foreign Affairs, Legal Affairs and Local Government of Grenada, His Excellency The Honourable Raphael Fletcher.

Mr. Fletcher (Grenada): In my address to this noble Assembly last year, I drew attention to the significance of virtue and, furthermore, to the enhancement of the release of the power which resides in virtue, through the supply of appropriate means. Moreover, I invited reflection on the quintessential sameness of all humankind and urged that this, together with a genuine commitment to virtue, be adopted as the guiding principles of the General Assembly as it addresses and deliberates upon the realities of human interaction in our contemporary world.

As it is for any individual society or nation, so it is for the international global community. Ethics is the science whose aim is to produce the good man and woman, while politics is the science which aims at fashioning the good society. Thus, politics must be founded upon and unceasingly informed by ethics.

Doubtless this is an ideal. Nonetheless, it is an ideal we must constantly strive to achieve if we are to realize peace within and among our nations — peace, which was described by Thomas Aquinas as the tranquillity of order.

In this era of accelerating change in so many areas in every portion of our diverse global community, it is of singular importance to the well-being of each of our individual national communities, as it is for the overall international global community, that we recognize, observe and be faithful to those values and principles which, inherently, are unchanging.

One such unchanging value is that of right — moral right: what Plato conceived of as the virtue of justice, and what in Roman law was characterized as the *jus*, or moral law. Indeed, it is rather significant that Plato perceived the whole function of education as being to elicit the best things that are latent in the soul, and to do so by directing the soul to the right things.

I am highly honoured and deeply pleased to address, on behalf of the Government and the people of Grenada, this Assembly at its fifty-second regular session, during the course of which change must be a transcending theme, as also must be the initiation, institution and prudent management of change in the pursuit and conduct of international affairs.

On behalf of my delegation, I express to this Assembly the warm greetings of the Government and the people of Grenada. I also express our sincere congratulations to Mr. Kofi Annan on his accession to the office of Secretary-General, as well as on his manner of addressing the duties deriving therefrom. We rejoice in his demonstration of virtue, and we believe that his profound knowledge of the United Nations augurs well for his leadership in pursuance of international peace and security.

My Government is heartened by his commitment to the reform of the Organization and is reassured by his efforts to fashion a more effective and efficient United Nations system. We are hopeful that one of the benefits which will accrue from such an improved system will be the enhancement of the economic viability of small developing States, such as ours; and we further hope that his efforts to realize the system envisaged will not be frustrated by the withholding of the substantial overall payments which are due.

My delegation joins me in extending warm congratulations to Mr. Hennadiy Udovenko of Ukraine on his election to the presidency of the General Assembly at its fifty-second session. We commend Mr. Razali Ismail of Malaysia for his exemplary conduct of the proceedings of the fifty-first session.

The rapidly changing global environment presents grave challenges to small States, especially small island States such as Grenada. It also does so for the United Nations, whose very institution was prompted by the adoption of the ethic of a confraternity of nations informed by a common subscription to the concept of the empowerment of virtue through the furnishing of adequate and appropriate means in order that right might prevail in the international community.

In this latter regard, attention is especially invited to the notion of global trade and liberalization as it is currently regulated by the World Trade Organization (WTO), with its inherent inconsistencies, which operate to the disadvantage of the smaller economies. The WTO rules relating now to the products of agriculture and agro-industry bear testimony to the injustice inflicted upon those of us who live and labour within the confines of small economies — witness the recent ruling on bananas, which underscores the insensitivity displayed by way of the challenge which triggered it.

Moreover, the Uruguay Round Agreements require a massive legislative agenda on Grenada's part — as they undoubtedly do for most developing countries. Our national laws in the areas of trade in goods and services as well as intellectual property must be reviewed and extensive legislative changes made. Thus we must acquire the necessary legal expertise to work on this project until implementation is fully accomplished - and all this by the end of the year 2000.

We shall, of course, make full use of the assistance that is available through WTO as well as that offered by international bodies such as the World Intellectual Property Organization (WIPO).

Nonetheless, it must be explicitly stated that, in Grenada's view, the Uruguay Round Agreements have created for small developing States significantly more burdens than the benefits they are proclaimed to bring under the banner of global free trade — at least now, and for the foreseeable future, unless corrective measures are soon instituted.

My Government continues in its efforts to restructure the Grenada economy and is pursuing a programme of economic diversification. This involves broadening and enhancing sectors such as agro-processing, light manufacturing, crafts, services — including offshore financial services — tourism and agriculture.

Nevertheless, my Government is deeply aware that the success of its economic policies will depend significantly on the support of the multilateral financial institutions and also of friendly countries in respect of training and the dissemination of knowledge and skills, as well as the setting up of enterprises and facilities that are strategic to secondary economic growth.

Accordingly, my Government is pleased to have recorded in the annals of the Assembly, its gratitude for, and appreciation of, the assistance which Grenada has so far received, as well as that which we are currently receiving, from the European Union through the Lomé Agreement, and from other friendly countries.

Despite constraints such as I have referred to, as well as others, my Government continues in its efforts to stimulate employment and enhance employability. In the latter regard, we are now in the process of institutionalizing on-the-job training for our unemployed youth, whilst expanding our formal programmes for skills training. As for stimulating employment, special emphasis is being placed on self-employment — and this by way of fostering the small enterprise and micro-enterprise sectors. For we are convinced that the development of these sectors is crucial to our preferred process for national development. We believe that through such endeavours our people will grow in dignity and self-reliance.

My Government will continue to provide an enabling environment for the private sector to thrive and expand. And we seek the active partnership of the multilateral institutions as well as of the international community, through joint ventures, technological transfers and financial and technical assistance to provide the impetus to sustained economic growth.

Democracy and good governance can flourish only in an environment of peace — an environment characterized by the tranquillity of order; not an order that is imposed, but an order which springs from mutual trust and mutual regard amongst the individuals who compose the particular society; an order which is constantly revitalized and continually enhanced by mutual love; an order which resonates to the truth that "My origin is their origin, my conscience is their conscience, my contention is their contention, and my pilgrimage is their pilgrimage". In this context, we invite attention to the apparent emergence recently of terrorism in the Caribbean region, with the bombings in Cuba.

The kind of order referred to would inherently involve individual social and economic well-being: true prosperity, individual and societal.

At the international global community level, such order is realizable only by way of a concept and praxis for a new global human order such as was enunciated by the late President Cheddi Jagan of Guyana and corroborated by the leaders of the Group of 7 countries in their communiqué "Making a Success of Globalization for the Benefit of All" (A/51/208, annex II).

The pursuit of true politics in relation to the fashioning of the confraternity of nations requires that we strive to institute such a new global human order.

Within the compass of such a global human order, there inevitably would be the eradication of the crippling and strangulating debt burden which afflicts so devastatingly the very poor and so dehumanizingly the poorest countries of our world. So also would be action against environmental degradation, and towards

sustainable economic development, especially in the poorer countries and particularly in small island developing States.

Similarly, as to the eradication of poverty worldwide — and, in this regard it is fitting that I repeat here the observation of the Right Honourable Clare Short, United Kingdom Secretary of State for International Development:

> "A world that has one in five of its people living in abject poverty is certainly not just and it is also dangerously unstable".

Natural disasters, particularly in small island States, require special concern on the part of the confraternity of nations. The devastation recently experienced in Montserrat trumpets the need for a United Nations programme to deal with the aftermath of such natural destruction.

Grenada welcomes the recent United Nations initiative in respect of Haiti, and salutes every country participating in this noble endeavour, as well as the United Nations and its officers, whose vision informed that initiative.

We welcome also the steps towards achieving peace between parties in countries in Central America, and we applaud them. Indeed, as the current Chairman of the Association of Caribbean States, Grenada rejoices in such action. For, through the Association, we in the Caribbean region seek to widen and deepen the process of integration amongst the island States of the Caribbean and those mainland States whose shores are lapped by the Caribbean Sea — and this includes Cuba.

My Government is acutely mindful that poor States are peculiarly vulnerable to the violation of their territorial integrity, since they can ill afford the wherewithal to ensure non-encroachment in the vicinity of their borders. And the larger such poor continental States are, the greater that particular vulnerability.

Similarly, for small island States, in particular those of the Caribbean, where the threat is not so much to territorial integrity but to security, that threat is posed by those engaged in the illicit business of narcotics trafficking, both by way of buying and selling. Our small island States of the Caribbean have become primary and secondary transshipment centres en route from the large producers to the commensurately large consumers. My Government therefore asks earnestly that this noble Assembly address this matter in accordance with the ethic of the true politics relating to the overall international community of humankind.

The current United Nations International Drug Control Programme is indeed commendable, and Grenada is pleased to be actively participating in it at the pace we can best afford.

Nonetheless, it cannot but be admitted that this Programme does not offer, much less provide, the protection which is needed for our people — particularly our youth — against the ravishment of drug use and the blight which eventually afflicts the small-scale transporters, or so-called mules. Surely this process of transshipment can be severely curtailed, if not completely eradicated, through planned, concerted international action.

My Government's concern for youth and children is not confined to Grenada. Nor is it limited to our brothers and sisters in the Caribbean Community or in the Association of Caribbean States. Our concern embraces youth and children everywhere. Accordingly, we condemn the exploitation of youth and children in any form. We say no to the abuse of children for pornography and prostitution.

My Government welcomes the recent conclusion of the Convention on the comprehensive banning of anti-personnel landmines, and we urge a significant acceleration in the controlled destruction of those mines which are relics of campaigns of war of one scale or another.

In relation to the Security Council, Grenada unequivocally supports its expansion in a manner such as would facilitate the realization of true politics in the overall international community. This, we believe, would involve an increase in both the permanent and non-permanent categories of membership.

Both such increases, in our view, should be characterized by a significant presence of developing countries. For, in Grenada's view, what is required in the reformed Security Council is not more of the same kind of distribution of perception, but more equity among the component parts of the spectrum of perception.

The very notion of equity inevitably calls forth the notion of justice. In the context of justice in the United Nations, there arises quite effortlessly the case of the Republic of China on Taiwan. To all who subscribe to

the principle of the right of a people to self-determination, the case for membership in the United Nations for the Republic of China on Taiwan is a compelling one. Indeed, it is incontestable. For, some 50 years ago, these people chose self-determination. They voted with their feet as they moved from their homes on mainland China to the island of Taiwan, and today 21.3 million people practise democracy in the Republic of China on Taiwan. Their economic achievements are well and widely known, as is their willingness to participate in the international community as a Member of the United Nations.

What more is required for the Republic of China to be admitted to United Nations membership? One may well ask. My answer: justice. The mention of justice evokes recollection of two very insightful observations which deserve to be shared in this noble Assembly. First, Reinhold Niebur, in his Foreword to "The Children of Light and the Children of Darkness", offered the following comment on justice:

> "Man's capacity for justice makes democracy possible; but Man's inclination to injustice makes democracy necessary."

Well might we enquire as to the origin of this inclination to injustice. But the success or failure to identify that origin notwithstanding, an effective manner of dealing with that inclination is provided by Plato's construct for education, which is centred on exposure of the soul to the right things.

And second, in his Foreword to Allan Bloom's thought-provoking study on American higher education — the number-one bestseller of its time, one decade ago, Saul Bellow offered a view that is particularly pertinent to the notion of exposure of the soul to the right things. Saul Bellow contends that:

> "In the greatest confusion there is an open channel to the soul ... The channel is always there, and it is our business to keep it open, to have access to the deepest part of ourselves — to that part of us which is conscious of a higher consciousness ... The soul has to find and hold its ground against hostile forces, sometimes embodied in ideas which frequently deny its very existence, and which indeed often seem to be trying to annul it altogether."

The Assembly may well ask, "How does the soul hold its ground?" My reply: through virtue and constant exposure to the right things. Let right prevail.

May God bless the President of, and everyone participating in, this fifty-second regular session of this noble Assembly, which through His grace will be a transforming blessing to our world.

The Acting President: We have heard the last speaker in the general debate for this meeting.

I shall now call on those representatives who wish to speak in exercise of the right of reply. May I remind members that statements in exercise of the right of reply are limited to 10 minutes for the first intervention and to five minutes for the second intervention and should be made by delegations from their seats.

Mr. Matuszewski (Poland): The Foreign Minister of the Republic of Belarus, in his statement to the Assembly on 2 October 1997, made a number of references to the process of the enlargement of the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) and how it is perceived by the Government of the Republic of Belarus.

We have asked to speak in exercise of the right of reply not to engage in polemics, since we are aware of the fact that Belarus has its own distinctive position on this subject. We are, nevertheless, bemused by the way the Foreign Minister chose to express his country's position. He stated, in particular:

> "In the event that we had on our western borders not the friendly sovereign Polish State we have now but a military organization, it would certainly push us to seriously analyse and reconsider our national security considerations." [See *Official Records of the General Assembly, Fifty-second Session, Plenary Meetings*, 21st meeting]

Having heard such a statement, one is at least entitled to pose some serious questions. Did the Foreign Minister want to imply that the friendly sovereign Republic of Poland to which he made reference might suddenly disappear, to be replaced by what he characterized as a military organization? And, if so, what makes him believe that?

If the Foreign Minister of Belarus, in the portion of his statement to which I have just referred, meant to refer to the implications of Poland's entry into the North Atlantic Alliance, we would like to assure him of the following: Poland, as a member of NATO, will continue to be a sovereign and friendly neighbour of Belarus. Anything that attempts to imply the contrary is, for us,

unacceptable. We hope that the wording chosen by the Foreign Minister of Belarus was not meant to make such an attempt.

The good-neighbourly and friendly relations between Poland and Belarus constitute an important historic asset. Poland will spare no efforts to foster them. We would like to assure our Belarusian friends that to have a friendly sovereign State as a neighbour is undoubtedly a mutual desire.

Mr. Ndaruzaniye (Burundi) (*interpretation from French*): On Friday, 3 October 1997, at the end of the day, we heard a statement by the Permanent Representative of the United Republic of Tanzania, speaking in exercise of the right of reply to the statement made in the General Assembly on 2 October 1997 by the Minister for External Relations and Cooperation of Burundi.

On behalf of my delegation, I will not go back over all the points my colleague made, but I would like simply at the outset to welcome the interest that Tanzania and the international community have shown in helping the people and the Government of Burundi in their efforts to move beyond the crisis that has now lasted for nearly four years.

In those efforts, the people of Burundi remain the key element, and no solution to the crisis can possibly be found without our people, even one that might come from the international community.

It is with that concern in mind that for more than a year the Government of Burundi has been engaged in a peace process based on an extensive consultation of our people through domestic debate and on the peace conferences held abroad, so that all the people of Burundi, without exception, could be involved in inclusive political negotiations open to all parties concerned in the conflict in Burundi.

We hail the efforts that have been made by a number of special envoys and representatives of the international community alongside the designated mediator, but we also hope that the obstacles pointed out by the Head of the delegation of Burundi in his statement of 2 October 1997, obstacles that stand in the way of such mediation, might be cleared away so as to increase the chances for success in the second phase of the political negotiations, which are open to all. The Government of Burundi is waiting to be consulted by the facilitator as to the venue and date for the opening of those negotiations.

Moreover, we are convinced that such obstacles could not possibly be attributable to any friend of ours or to any country friendly to ours and working for peace in Burundi.

Burundi's current problems are the result of a confluence of many different factors and external and internal political and social events that would be very difficult indeed to go into here and now before the General Assembly.

The total and illegal economic blockade that has been imposed on the people of Burundi for over a year now is in no way contributing to the restoration of peace. On the contrary, it is killing a people through hunger and disease, as if the genocide and other massacres already inflicted on them had not been trial enough. We ask those responsible for the blockade to lift it, for the people it hits hardest are the most vulnerable, many of them children, and they deserve everyone's protection.

Turning to the question of Burundi refugees, Burundi has signed every accord of the United Nations and the Organization of African Unity, as well as the tripartite Burundi-Tanzanian-Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees accords on this issue. All machinery must be brought into play to resolve this matter within the aforementioned context.

I shall not try the Assembly's patience further, but in conclusion I should like to reaffirm the commitment of the people and Government of Burundi to seeking a peaceful solution to the present crisis through political negotiations open to all the parties concerned.

Only through dialogue can confidence, peace and democracy in our country be rebuilt.

Mr. Jabir (United Republic of Tanzania): We have heard the representative of Burundi. Since his statement contained no new element, I wish only to reiterate what my delegation said in the Assembly last Friday. The problems of Burundi are not bilateral, with Tanzania or indeed with the region. The problems are in Burundi and among its people. The attempt to externalize the problems is unfortunate and must be rejected.

My country has stated that its only desire is to assist. It has no political agenda in that country. It is up to the Burundi authorities to make it easier for Tanzania and, indeed, the international community, to help. We cannot help and do so efficiently unless the Burundi

authorities face the reality of a negotiated settlement. There is no alternative to that.

The accusation of partiality or armed aggression or insecurity of venue are all smoke screens to mask the deep-seated reluctance of the Burundi military authorities to pursue a negotiated political settlement. This should be rejected.

My country remains committed to facilitating dialogue and peace in Burundi. A peaceful Burundi is a better neighbour with which to interact and trade. We look forward to the day when we will be spared the cyclical inflow of refugees, when the people of Burundi will not live in perpetual fear and when the country will be stable and at peace.

The meeting rose at 5 p.m.

United Nations A/52/PV.27

General Assembly
Fifty-second Session

Official Records

27th plenary meeting
Tuesday, 7 October 1997, 10 a.m.
New York

President: Mr. Udovenko . . . . . (Ukraine)

The meeting was called to order at 10.10 a.m.

Agenda item 8 *(continued)*

Adoption of the agenda and organization of work: letter from the Chairman of the Committee on Conferences (A/52/340/Add.1)

The President: This morning the Assembly will first turn its attention to document A/52/340/Add.1, which contains a letter dated 6 October 1997 addressed to me by the Chairman of the Committee on Conferences. As members are aware, the Assembly, in paragraph 7 of its resolution 40/243, decided that no subsidiary organ of the General Assembly should be permitted to meet at United Nations Headquarters during a regular session of the Assembly unless explicitly authorized by the Assembly.

As indicated in the letter I have just mentioned, the Committee on Conferences has recommended that the General Assembly authorize the Committee on Information to meet in New York during the main part of the fifty-second session of the General Assembly.

May I take it that the General Assembly adopts the recommendation of the Committee on Conferences?

It was so decided.

Agenda item 9 *(continued)*

General debate

The President: The first speaker is the Minister for Foreign Affairs of Uzbekistan, His Excellency Mr. Abdulaziz Kamilov.

Mr. Kamilov (Uzbekistan) (*interpretation from Russian*): Allow me to congratulate you, Sir, on your election to your high office, and to express our confidence in the success of the work of the current session. I also wish to thank sincerely Ambassador Razali Ismail for his enormous contribution to the work of the sessions of the General Assembly over which he presided.

The changes which have been taking place in our world in recent years and the formation of a qualitatively new geopolitical system of international relations require the adaptation of the United Nations to new realities, with the creation of a flexible and efficient international mechanism which can take effective measures to address the new challenges of our time.

In Uzbekistan we have a positive assessment of Secretary-General Kofi Annan's plan for reforming the United Nations. Although a number of these proposals require careful study and additional elaboration, we can already highlight concrete aspects which deserve support. I refer primarily to the decision on the enlargement of the permanent membership of the Security Council through

97-86169 (E)

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the inclusion of Germany and Japan, countries which today are playing a significant role in world economic and political affairs.

We also support the enlargement of the non-permanent membership of the Security Council, which, in our view, would provide for a more democratic representation of other States in this body.

To promote efficiency in implementing the resolutions of the United Nations, there is a need to reinforce and broaden the authority of the Secretary-General. In our view, we should also support the proposal to establish the post of a Deputy Secretary-General.

The idea of merging all the United Nations entities in different countries under one flag in the so-called United Nations Houses seems to us quite rational.

The reform of the United Nations administration structure will allow for reallocation of the funds saved to enhance development programmes.

The creation of a single agency to combat crime, terrorism, drug-trafficking and money-laundering is also a timely proposal.

The proposals on consolidating the economic and social departments, cutting down on United Nations administrative staff, replacing the Department of Humanitarian Affairs and establishing a streamlined Emergency Relief Coordination Office to coordinate activities of all the United Nations agencies in implementing assistance projects, also merit our attention.

Maintaining security and stability in Central Asia and providing conditions for the sustainable development of the States of the region are among the crucial guidelines for the foreign policy of Uzbekistan. To achieve these goals, Uzbekistan has put forward concrete initiatives, particularly within the rostrum of the United Nations.

I should like to take this opportunity to draw attention again to a number of problems which require an immediate solution, both at the regional level and at the broader international level.

I refer first to the continuing conflict in Afghanistan, which has recently become particularly brutal, and to the continuing instability in Tajikistan.

Our position of principle regarding the Afghan settlement remains unchanged. Its major aspects include such points as the maintenance of the territorial integrity of Afghanistan; the rejection of force as a means of settling the conflict; the cessation of external interference; the imposition of an arms embargo; the participation in a phased peace process of all the major forces involved in the conflict; the implementation of the peace process under the aegis of the United Nations, and with the participation of the Organization of the Islamic Conference (OIC); and the creation of a broad-based coalition Government including all the various opposition parties.

We share the view of the Secretary-General that if the meaningless civil war in Afghanistan is to be halted, regional and international participants must shoulder additional obligations. Despite all the complications of the situation around Afghanistan, trends have recently been observed which can, and indeed must, be used to begin the peace process.

The proposal on imposing an arms embargo deserves special attention. Such an embargo, which has already been proposed by Uzbekistan on many occasions, must be considered the principal condition for halting external interference in Afghanistan's affairs. We are well aware of the technical difficulties related to the implementation of this initiative in the conditions prevailing in Afghanistan. However, we do not think that they are insurmountable. In our view, the process of imposing an arms embargo should be divided into two stages: first, the adoption by the Security Council of a resolution on the embargo, which would be political in nature; secondly, the drawing up of United Nations control machinery for compliance.

We welcome the stepping up of United Nations efforts to resolve the Afghan problem, in particular, the appointment of Mr. Brahimi as the Special Envoy of the Secretary-General. We hope that the United Nations will also support our initiative for the creation of a contact group from among the countries neighbouring Afghanistan, as well as the United States, Russia and other interested States, together with, of course, representatives of inter-Afghan forces.

Uzbekistan fully supports the principle of the indivisibility of security — internal, regional and global. Our country was among the first of the newly independent States to accede to the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons. At the forty-eighth

session of the General Assembly, in 1993, Uzbekistan called upon the international community to declare Central Asia a nuclear-weapon-free zone, and we have been consistently moving towards the implementation of this initiative.

Concrete confirmation of this policy was the holding of the international conference "Central Asia — Nuclear-Weapon-Free Zone" in Tashkent on 14 to 16 September, under United Nations auspices and with the participation of high-level representatives of more than 60 international organizations and countries. This forum was a major international event in the history of the region. However, we are well aware that the process of establishing a nuclear-weapon-free zone in Central Asia is not a one-time political action. It must be carried out within the framework of existing agreements and in accordance with international experience, in particular within the framework of the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT) and the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty.

In this regard, on the regional level a reliable system of collective efforts by States participating in this initiative should be developed. Those efforts must ensure the non-proliferation regime, the ecological safety of hazardous industries that involve nuclear raw materials and the prevention of leakage of nuclear technologies and materials.

On the international level it is necessary to give priority attention to the settlement of regional problems. The phased advancement towards global security is possible only after we create secure and stable regions. In other words, when dealing with global problems, it is essential to follow the principle of moving from regionalism to globalism.

It is also necessary to fundamentally reconsider the security guarantees provided to the non-nuclear States, first and foremost to those participating in nuclear-weapon-free zones. We need to organically combine the efforts for promoting non-proliferation and ensuring global nuclear security with the resolution of regional problems. The problem of non-proliferation must be considered in close linkage with significant reductions of other types of weapons of mass destruction.

Uzbekistan highly appreciates the efforts of international organizations — first of all the United Nations, the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE) and the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) — for their support of the Central Asian initiative. We would like to request the General Assembly, its President and the Secretary-General to assist in the passage of a special resolution in support of the initiative declaring Central Asia a nuclear-weapon-free zone and in the establishment of a United Nations expert group to study the forms and elements of the regional agreement on this issue.

Our cooperation within the framework of the OSCE is making a significant contribution to enhancing regional security in Central Asia. We consider the OSCE Parliamentary Assembly Expanded Bureau Meeting Seminar, held in September 1997 in the capital of Uzbekistan, as the world community's recognition of Central Asia's importance in issues related to strengthening peace and stability on the regional and global levels.

The creation of the Central Asian collective peacekeeping battalion by Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan and Uzbekistan was an important step towards safeguarding peace and stability in the region. For the first time on the territory of Kazakhstan and Uzbekistan broad-scale exercises of the Central Asian collective peacekeeping battalion, Centrazbat 97, were held, with the participation of multinational forces. These exercises constituted a serious test, the successful completion of which confirmed this battalion as a fully fledged unit in the United Nations reserve peacekeeping forces.

Once again we should like to take advantage of this United Nations forum to call upon the international community to pool its efforts to tackle the serious threat to the security of the Central Asian region that may also have consequences on the global level. I am referring to the ecological situation in the Aral Sea basin.

The current session of the General Assembly — the Reform Assembly, as it was called by Secretary-General Kofi Annan — must give a fresh impetus to the joint efforts of the international community in combating organized crime, drug dealing and terrorism. We need to develop transnational programmes to confront these challenges and threats.

We may confidently say that if favourable conditions and trends are maintained, in the twenty-first century Central Asia, given its geostrategic significance and its vast natural, energy and human resources, will become a promising and dynamic regional market of a global importance.

The interdependence of the situation emerging in Central Asia, the common European security system taking shape and the outlook for developing situations within the vast Asian continent means there is an urgent need for the international community to take measures to ensure durable peace and stability in this region along with its sustainable development.

Mr. Koba (Central African Republic) (*interpretation from French*): First and foremost, Sir, I would like to echo the eminent speakers who have already addressed you from this rostrum in conveying the warm congratulations of the Central African delegation on your resounding election to the presidency of this, the fifty-second session of the General Assembly. The fact that you, Sir, have been chosen bears witness to the fact that your country, Ukraine, continues to play an important role on the world stage. Your wealth of experience and your abilities as an experienced diplomat augur well indeed for the success of our work, and I can also assure you that you can count on our support and our availability to assist you.

I would also like to express our fullest satisfaction with the work of your predecessor, Mr. Razali Ismail, for the talent and skill with which he so wonderfully discharged his duties. And we assure His Excellency Mr. Kofi Annan, Secretary-General, whose election was only a just reward for his many years of service to the United Nations, of the renewed support of the people and Government of the Central African Republic.

This session is being held at a delicate time in the history of our Organization, because it is faced with many different political, economic, social, cultural, legal and institutional problems which call for the appropriate reforms.

To renew the United Nations, to turn it into a dynamic, democratic and effective organization, is a major challenge for this session, which the Secretary-General quite rightly described as the Reform Assembly. His brilliant report presented on 16 July 1997 is perfectly in tune with the Member States' expectations, because it not only highlights the challenges facing us on the threshold of the first century of a new millennium, but it also, and above all, puts forward proposals for the longer term.

The United Nations has a very important role to play in the areas of safeguarding and maintaining international peace and security and promoting social and economic development, democracy, human rights and justice. The Organization must be reformed and strengthening so as to better confront the new realities of today's world. The Central African Republic will make its own modest contribution to this very important endeavour in close collaboration with the member States of the Organization of African Unity and the Non-Aligned Movement.

As regards reforming the Security Council, the Central African Republic hopes that the Council will be expanded so as to provide equitable geographical representation.

But what about the ever-widening gap between three quarters of humankind and the remainder? What about the proliferation of armed conflicts against a backdrop of intolerance, ethnic tension and deadly political confrontations that jeopardize international peace and security? Our Organization does not seem to be able to come to grips with these problems.

And yet, a few years ago, after a series of major events radically transformed the old post-war order, we believed that the world was at last poised to move into a new era because of the ensuing clear-cut improvement in the international political climate and the new possibilities for cooperation that emerged. These were supposed to build confidence among nations and facilitate the quest for compromise on most of the questions of concern to the international community.

Regrettably, we were overly optimistic. In reflecting on the sad realities of the day, I have in mind particularly the many human lives lost in vain in Algeria and the thousands of women and children forcibly torn from their homes and who, in the neighbouring Republic of the Congo, Burundi, Sierra Leone, Somalia and elsewhere, are still paying a heavy price for our imperfections, our contradictions and our intolerance.

I believe that it is time to call upon the international community and our Organization — which in this alarmingly serious case seems not to be fulfilling its primary responsibility for the maintenance of international peace and security — to tackle resolutely the internal conflicts that are unfolding within our own States. We must address these new conflicts, which entail serious violations of fundamental human rights and which we are ill-prepared to prevent and manage, because what is at stake is the very existence of our States, along with the balance and cohesiveness of the international community.

The Central African Republic had cause to welcome the convening on 25 September last of the ministerial-level meeting of the member States of the Security Council devoted to the situation in Africa. The recommendations emanating from those deliberations should be translated into reality.

The delegation of the Central African Republic nonetheless welcomes the fact that significant progress towards peace has been achieved in Angola, Liberia and Haiti. But we continue to believe that a great deal of work remains to be done by the parties concerned to overcome the obstacles standing in the way of reconciliation and the restoration of peace in the Middle East, in Afghanistan and in Cyprus.

Unlike in other regions of the world, where renewed economic growth is henceforth irreversible, Africa's lack of good performance and its economic and social situation remain a cause for concern in this era of globalization. However, we are not underestimating the scope and the complexity of the crucial problems facing the international community at century's end. To resolve these problems, a new type of cooperation is urgently needed so as not to exclude three quarters of humankind from the march towards progress and the common weal.

Africa continues to experience immense economic difficulties because of its lack of control over certain external factors affecting its development, such as the collapse in the prices fetched by its commodities, its debt burden and the inadequacy of its capital flows, which have prevented it from achieving sustained economic growth and raising the living standards of its peoples.

Worse yet is the case of the least developed countries, most of which are located on the African continent and whose situation remains abysmal notwithstanding the timid steps forward taken here and there. Though globalization has given rise to a new social contract, the principle of partnership and of shared responsibility between the least developed countries and the international community, with the goal of reversing socio-economic decline and speeding up the process of sustained growth and sustainable development, should guide both sides in their commitment. Now the question is how to become competitive without the support of official development assistance, which is continuing to decline.

As we see it, this alarming situation calls for a pragmatic approach to cooperation between Africa and its partners, in particular the international financial and monetary institutions, which should not lose sight of these factors in determining modalities for cooperating with the continent and providing it access to global resources. We cannot overemphasize the urgent need for a greater sense of responsibility and for a far stronger commitment on the part of the entire international community vis-à-vis this continent, which is foundering economically and socially. It is this new awareness that will help Africa emerge at last from the chaos and anarchy that continue to engulf it.

Without economic and social progress, there can be no talk of peace nor of democracy, because peace, democracy and development go hand in hand. This is especially true in the case of the Central African Republic, long known, owing to its long-standing commitment to peace, as the Switzerland of Africa. Its President, Ange-Félix Patassé, rose to the highest office in the land through free and transparent elections and daily preached peace and dialogue in the Central African subregion. Nonetheless, the world was recently witness to the sad spectacle of the Central African Republic's being assailed by what have come to be known as the serial mutinies of Bangui, simply because of its inability to consolidate its still fledgling democratic experience through sustained economic and social development.

The case of the Central African Republic casts light on the root causes of the wave of violence that is sweeping our subregion. The mutinies — which, tragically, lasted a full year and have thrown the entire country into near-civil war — occurred against the backdrop of a tribally motivated attempt at regaining power and as the result of manipulation by outside forces seeking to put an end to our democratic process. But none of this would have been possible had it not been for the very difficult economic and social situation of our country. The joint impact of a terrible legacy, the free-fall devaluation of the CFA franc and the chronically meagre revenues coming into the public treasury had for all practical purposes created a situation in which the State could no longer regularly pay its civil servants.

The upshot of this crisis was all but catastrophic because the damage done by the tragic events of April, May and November 1996 gravely undermined our country's potential for economic and social development. The technical committee set up to take stock of the damage concluded that for the first two cases of mutiny alone, it would cost some 41.9 billion CFA francs to make up for the losses experienced by the State, businesses, projects and individuals — not to mention the

cost of the measures needed to help the many victims of that conflict.

Beyond the necessary mobilization of all our compatriots — to whom His Excellency Mr. Ange-Félix Patassé, President of the Republic, has issued a powerful call for the restoration of peace and national unity as a foundation for the genuine economic recovery of our country — it is only appropriate for our partners and the entire international community to stand with us and not against us. For it is the intention of the Central African Republic to continue and consolidate the democratic process to which it is resolutely committed.

And beyond the praiseworthy support of the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), my landlocked country must be given the wherewithal to continue to be — as we already are out of a sense of moral duty — a land of welcome and hospitality for Sudanese, Rwandan, Burundian, Congolese and other brothers and sisters who are paying a heavy price for our world's intolerance, ethnic tensions and deadly political wrangling.

The fact is that it is in adversity that one knows one's true friends. Our own adversity has enabled the people of the Central African Republic to gauge the sympathy and solidarity they have enjoyed during the most trying times of their history. On behalf of His Excellency Mr. Ange-Félix Patassé, President of the Republic and Head of State and of Government, and of the people of the Central African Republic, I reiterate our thanks to the entire international community, and most particularly to France, the Federal Republic of Germany, the United States of America, Japan, the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland, Gabon, Chad, Senegal, Togo, Mali, Burkina Faso, the United Nations, the Organization of African Unity and the European Union, for the support and invaluable assistance they are graciously according us.

I take this opportunity also to convey particular thanks to all the States members of the Security Council, which on 6 August last unanimously adopted resolution 1125 (1997) on the Central African Republic. The immediate effect of that decision was to deter open attempts at destabilization, and to enable — as it continues to do — the Inter-African Mission to Monitor the Implementation of the Bangui Agreements (MISAB) better to ensure peace and security in the capital and the provinces of the Central African Republic.

The peace is still fragile and precarious, and on behalf of the entire people of the Central African Republic we urgently appeal to the United Nations to enable the mandate of MISAB to be extended until the Central African Republic possesses a loyal national army that can guarantee the survival of our republican institutions.

I wish the Assembly full success in its work on the basis of the principle of universality which is so dear to our Organization.

The President: I call next on His Excellency Mr. Jérémie Bonnelame, Minister for Foreign Affairs of Seychelles.

Mr. Bonnelame (Seychelles) (*interpretation from French*): I take this opportunity to congratulate you, Sir, on your election to the presidency of the General Assembly at its fifty-second session.

I wish also to thank your predecessor, Ambassador Razali of Malaysia, for the skill and commitment with which he guided our work during the last session.

I convey to the Secretary-General and his staff my high appreciation of the often difficult initiatives they have taken this year to promote peace not only between peoples but also within nations. These initiatives accent the Organization's role and its principles, to which I am pleased to reaffirm the commitment of the people of Seychelles. There have also been initiatives to promote development and to protect the environment and the weak among us, and to help stateless individuals and refugees from countries that are often marginalized.

We need a consistent, effective United Nations backed by the funds necessary for it to carry out its mandate. The Secretary-General has proposed a series of reforms along these lines, and the Republic of Seychelles firmly backs that initiative.

Seychelles is a small island State. Yet we have done all in our power to integrate ourselves fully into international life and into the world economy. In that connection, Seychelles has requested membership of the World Trade Organization; it is already a member of the Indian Ocean Commission and the Common Market for Eastern and Southern Africa, and recently joined the Southern African Development Community. Seychelles has thus adopted an open economic policy designed to be attractive; yet we continue to face the handicaps

characteristic of an island State, exacerbated by a lack of human and natural resources and by the limits of our domestic markets.

Following the Global Conference on the Sustainable Development of Small Island Developing States, held in Barbados in 1994, and in accordance with resolutions adopted in international forums, the international community is heeding the appeal of small island States for help in laying and strengthening the foundations of sustainable development. Like larger countries, small island States have the same aspirations, the same needs — and even more so. Yet they are disadvantaged by their greatly limited means and their structurally fragile economies. That is why it would be more equitable to identify specific criteria that would integrate them harmoniously into the process of global cooperation and economic development on both the bilateral and the multilateral levels.

Recently, Seychelles has experienced remarkable climatic setbacks. Unceasing torrential rains of unusual intensity have caused loss of life, flooding, landslides and the destruction of homes and of infrastructure of all kinds. They also threaten the environment on which our lifestyle depends and our ecosystem, especially in coastal areas.

For a small State striving to keep pace with development, an unexpected upheaval, with all its economic and other consequences, can have far-reaching effects that are not immediately evident.

I should like to take this opportunity to thank the Department of Humanitarian Affairs for having quickly dispatched an evaluation mission to take stock not only of the damage done but of the future threats such an upheaval poses, given the climatic change under way on a global level. Moreover, that mission was followed by the launching of an appeal to the international community for assistance. The people of the Seychelles are very grateful for all these actions.

In conclusion, I should like to express the hope that the future of our planet will bring vast improvements, notwithstanding the numerous difficulties that loom on the horizon. The United Nations, through its initiatives and the joint efforts of all peoples, will most surely achieve that goal.

The President: I now call on the Minister of State for Foreign Affairs and Cooperation of Equatorial Guinea, His Excellency Mr. Don Miguel Oyono Ndong Mifumu.

Mr. Oyono Ndong Mifumu (Equatorial Guinea) (*interpretation from Spanish*): Mr. President, it is a pleasure for me to join preceding speakers in congratulating you on the high distinction bestowed upon you and your country through your election to preside over this regular session of the General Assembly, to which we have all come imbued with our shared aspirations for the future of mankind. Once again, we come to this forum to convey the warmest greetings of solidarity, peace and hope of the people and Government of the Republic of Equatorial Guinea and, in particular, to express my country's views on the issues to be debated at this session.

We are three years away from a new millennium. This waiting period is an opportunity to think deeply about the challenges it has in store for us. We have moved in a very short time from a bipolar world, marked by the cold war and both strategic and ideological confrontations, to the new dynamics of globalization and the interdependence of States in their relations within the international system.

Indeed, when we consider that the millennium is about to end and that our Organization has now been in existence for more than 50 years, we must admit that a great deal has been achieved in terms of progress for mankind, particularly in the spheres of economic, scientific and technological development. Unfortunately, however, there are still grey areas of uncertainty as regards the future of mankind and the possibilities of establishing peace and security throughout the world.

In third world countries such as ours, for example, the lives of millions of people have been affected by a halt to progress and development as a result of extreme poverty, wars and armed conflicts and of the resurgence of mercenary activities and organized crime. In brief, the people are subjected to wanton violence, and as a result social, political and economic systems are breaking down.

We believe that the burden placed on our peoples is too great and that their problems require a lasting and stable response from the United Nations, to include the elimination of neo-interventionist practices; the prevention of conflicts; the reduction of poverty; the elimination of neo-protectionist barriers in world trade; and help in the fight against terrorism, fundamentalism and anachronistic nationalism. The preservation of the environment and the fight against drug-trafficking and the consumption of illicit drugs must also be prime objectives

of our collective action. These problems are not restricted to the territory of a single State, and therefore their solution demands the involvement and solidarity of all nations the world over, in a context of consensus and more coordinated international cooperation.

This, in turn, creates the need to ensure democratic reform of institutions and organizations of a global scope. The division of the world into categories must become a thing of the past, although we agree that some among us must shoulder special responsibilities vis-à-vis mankind since they, in a sense, are the ones responsible for certain threats that face us: the nuclear threat, the large-scale production and sale of armaments, the deterioration of the environment and the exercise of absolute power over the economy, finance and advances in science, technology and information. For if a third world exists today, it is only because someone exploited it to create a first world. We do not intend to wait for the emergence of a fourth world whose means and resources we can exploit to become developed. The point is to make sure that the resources amassed by the first world, the countries of the North, are today made available to the developing countries. For that to happen, the international trading system must be fair, poverty must be reduced, the social development and scientific and technological advance of developing countries must be fostered and the debt problem must be alleviated. In short, the differences in the quality of life that separate the citizens of the North from those of the South must be drastically reduced, in a spirit of open solidarity that will work for the progress and development of all countries.

All these aspects are the real issues to be discussed as we strive to attain lasting world peace and sustainable development in the coming millennium. The United Nations must therefore become a much more global and democratic world Organization so that it can take a dynamic approach to the problems weighing on mankind. It must be modernized, brought up to date and in tune with the new times, able to express the common will of all nations. Therefore, it must be restructured.

In this connection, Equatorial Guinea feels, as do many others, that it is time to reform the decision-making body of the United Nations, the Security Council. With regard to reform, we do not know whether it is the number of the Council's members that has prevented the United Nations from functioning with greater flexibility and efficiency. Nor are we sure that an increase in the number of permanent members will make for a more representative United Nations. What we must attempt to gain is more voices expressing the will of the peoples to see a more prosperous, peaceful and lastingly stable world. If this cannot be achieved by returning to the General Assembly its legitimate rights, it would be reasonable to have more members of the Security Council representing the regions and to ensure that the rules governing the use of the veto take into account the interest of the majority.

Equatorial Guinea is interested in ensuring that we have a properly functioning mechanism for agreement that reflects, above all, the spirit of equity and justice within the United Nations. For Equatorial Guinea, which is a small country in terms of both area and population, the democratic functioning of the United Nations provides a guarantee of security and stability in international relations and, above all, ensures scrupulous respect for every nation's right of sovereignty.

It is no idle claim that countries like ours do not receive appropriate treatment in relations between States. This applies, for example, to the vague demands relating to the universal principle of respect for fundamental human rights, which include political, economic and social rights.

In the specific case of Equatorial Guinea, it is neither understandable nor acceptable that, despite our great efforts to achieve a participatory democracy and respect for human rights, international public opinion is still being manipulated by some in order to project a false image of our country to the outside world for reasons that are inconsistent with this universal principle. We do not believe that anyone has a monopoly on values and virtues in this respect.

However, some years ago my country reached the conclusion that respect for human rights comes from a continuous process and not from an immediate response to criteria and demands imposed by groups or individuals with partisan political interests. It is in this context that the Government of Equatorial Guinea, of its own free will, is participating in and cooperating with all the initiatives of the United Nations and certain friendly countries to consolidate respect for human rights in the country. To that end, working with the United Nations Commission on Human Rights and the United Nations Centre for Human Rights, we have already organized various training, educational and information programmes relating to human rights.

My country is also proud to be one of the few countries in the world that, of its own free will, has agreed with another country — in our case, the United

States of America — a technical and financial assistance programme for measures aimed at the better exercise within our society of all human rights. In the context of this programme, far-reaching legal reforms have been set out to regulate this exercise of rights, as well as to achieve better administration and governance by the State. All these measures will be free from political interference based on ideological or partisan interests.

From this rostrum, therefore, I should like to confirm to international public opinion that in Equatorial Guinea human rights form an integral part of the priorities of the Government and of all the political forces of the nation and that we are critiquing and continuously assessing our progress. We do not, therefore, need either the approval or the guidance of any other society or institution in order to evaluate this tangible reality. Nor do we need any favourable or unfavourable propaganda from international media that may be linked to interests and pressure groups with hidden agendas.

We certainly agree that the same degree of pressure that is brought to bear with regard to the political rights of peoples must also be brought to bear in order to bring about more concrete support for the right of peoples to development and the progress of nations. It is our unanimous desire that in the third millennium the millions of men, women and children of the world will have the right to health services, education, decent housing, drinking water, electricity, food and clothing. But this objective cannot be achieved through restrictive measures and policies or through discriminatory economic blockades. We also wish to note that even these policies are not applied equitably throughout the international community.

Nevertheless, thanks to our strong conviction that we must play the principal role in our own development, today more than ever Equatorial Guinea is being targeted by certain forces and is becoming a strategically and economically significant zone in the subregion of central Africa. At the economic level, our country has just attained the status of oil-producing country, and attempts are being made to destabilize it for purposes of hegemony and for strategic reasons. Exactly five months ago, thanks to the spirit of African solidarity demonstrated by our sister republic of Angola, my country was saved from an attempted invasion by mercenaries, which was organized and financed by certain foreign political groups with murky and undisclosed designs on our nation.

Instability in the subregion of central Africa is today threatening the security of the region and the continent. Plans, strategies and machinery for destabilization are being fashioned from outside the region that are capable of destroying the present incipient democratic regimes in the region. Powerful communications media are actively involved in systematically distorting, disinformation and the misrepresentation of everything that is happening in the region. The situation in Angola, the Republic of the Congo, Rwanda and Burundi, as well as the recent conflicts in the Democratic Republic of the Congo, have been presented to international public opinion as Dantesque and apocalyptic.

We ask the United Nations to follow up on everything that is taking place in this region, particularly in the area of the Gulf of Guinea, from the Niger river delta to the enclave of Cabinda, as well as in the Great Lakes region.

In the specific case of the Republic of the Congo, a sister country with which we share common interests, the Government of Equatorial Guinea fully supports the international mediation efforts of the President of the Republic of Gabon, Mr. El Hadj Omar Bongo and of the special representative of the United Nations and of the Organization of African Unity (OAU).

We have the feeling that a new cold war is being waged in Africa based on cultural and linguistic influences. The fact that English, French, Portuguese and Spanish languages are spoken should only serve to enrich our values and capacities in terms of international cooperation and should be not a factor for confrontation and antagonism based on hegemony. This phenomenon has a serious adverse effect on our ability to achieve unity at the continental level in Africa for the peaceful resolution of conflicts. We therefore appeal to the United Nations and the OAU to initiate consensus-based actions that will lead to the reduction of such differences.

In this context, my Government is making efforts to maintain an internal and regional balance by developing a policy based on dialogue, consensus and good-neighbourliness, which are indispensable tools for ensuring peace and security in the continent.

In this process of political and economic change there have been setbacks and difficulties, but we have kept determinedly to the upward path that will enable us to leave behind a past that produced severe economic regressiveness and a breakdown of democratic principles and values. We want Equatorial Guinea to be included fully within the dynamics of change and globalization.

We want to ensure that we are incorporated into the regenerative trend of free market economy with a strong social component and dialogue based on patriotism, flexibility and tolerance among all the political forces and throughout civil society in our country.

Indeed, we have just held, from 8 to 13 September 1997, a national economic conference designed essentially to bring about a national dialogue to achieve a definition of a consensus-based strategy involving all political forces, civil society, non-governmental organizations and religious associations, with the participation of international agencies of the United Nations system, the World Bank, the European Union and African regional and subregional organizations, as well as friendly nations, aimed at implementing structural reforms in the economy and sustainable development of the country, through the rational and transparent use of oil, forest and fishing resources.

In the political field, we will proceed with the free and transparent reform of laws regulating the exercise of democratic liberties to achieve better governance for our nation. We have the firm political determination to attain these objectives and to meet our commitments, and we appeal for international solidarity.

I cannot conclude without expressing, on behalf of the Government of Equatorial Guinea, our warmest congratulations to the Secretary-General, Mr. Kofi Annan, on his wise and sound suggestions for reforming the bodies of the United Nations.

Equatorial Guinea will continue to support those efforts, aimed at achieving more dynamic and flexible mechanisms and structures for peacekeeping and the promotion of balanced and sustainable social and economic development in the world.

The President: I now call on the Minister for Foreign Affairs of Kyrgyzstan, His Excellency Mr. Muratbek Imanaliev.

Mr. Imanaliev (Kyrgyzstan) *(interpretation from Russian):* Allow me, on behalf of the Government of the Kyrgyz Republic and its people, to congratulate my colleague the Minister for Foreign Affairs of Ukraine, Mr. Udovenko, on his election to the high office of President of the fifty-second session of the General Assembly, and to wish him success in his endeavours. May I also express our feelings of respect for his country, which is playing an important role in resolving regional and global issues.

I would also like to express our heartfelt gratitude to the previous President of the General Assembly, the representative of the friendly Malaysian people, Ambassador Razali Ismail, for his active and dynamic efforts in establishing constructive dialogue on ways to reform the United Nations.

Like the entire international community, Kyrgyzstan expects genuine progress regarding the complex issue of the reform of the United Nations to come out of the present session. We are confident that the session will be able to cope with the problems facing the Organization today during this difficult and complicated period. The President and the Government of my country fully support the efforts of the Secretary-General, Mr. Kofi Annan, to enhance the efficiency of the United Nations, and his ability to respond sensitively and adequately to the challenges of a rapidly changing world. We are confident that a renewed United Nations will truly embody the principles and purposes proclaimed in its Charter, ensuring the harmony of the interests of all its Members in the name of peace and progress. We are ready to support all proposals that promote that goal.

Regarding the reform of the Security Council, the issue of improving its methods of work is no less important than the question of enlarging its membership. Kyrgyzstan believes that these questions must be considered together. We continue to support the proposal for permanent membership in the Council for Japan and Germany. However, in our view, the permanent members of the Security Council should also include one representative each from Africa, Asia and Latin America.

Mankind is now on the eve of a new millennium, and the changes taking place are altering the image of mankind and shifting the emphasis in the models for understanding and explaining our world. The collapse of a bipolar world has provided us an opportunity to focus efforts on resolving the issues of poverty, health care, education, economic development and democracy. We are all, however, still facing the threat of local and regional conflicts, international terrorism, organized crime, illegal trafficking in drugs and weapons, the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction and the deterioration of the state of the environment. All these negative aspects of human activity threaten the global trend towards strengthening peace and progress, undermine the fragile new democracies, wear down the

strength of the developing countries and generally threaten all our efforts focused on building a safer and better world.

The period after the achievement of independence was decisive for Kyrgyzstan, in the context of the formation of national statehood and of new social and economic ties. The country is actively seeking ways and means to harmoniously integrate itself into the international community. Clear successes have already been achieved on this thorny path in strengthening democratic institutions, radical reform of the economy of the country, improving the means for achieving inter-ethnic agreement, enhancing tolerance and ensuring human rights.

The leadership of the country is also concentrating on those domestic and international issues which must be developed on a permanent and positive basis for the well-being of the population of Kyrgyzstan.

Our country was the first of the newly independent States to draw up and adopt a national plan of action for environmental protection. In the light of the implementation of the decisions of the Rio Conference, Kyrgyzstan is now carrying out a country project, Capacity 21, which consists of three major components: coordination of and carrying out ecological studies, stable management of water resources and economic growth and social development. Through an edict of President Akayev, a national strategy has been adopted for sustainable human development which recognizes man, and his harmonious existence with nature, as the highest priority. Kyrgyzstan was the first country in the region to draw up a "concept for ecological security".

The Declaration adopted by the conference in Rio ranks mountainous ecological systems among those particularly vulnerable to natural and man-made impacts. It is universally recognized that peoples living in mountainous regions bear far heavier social and economic burdens than those who live in plains.

In the light of these factors and circumstances and also on the basis of the decisions of the Global Environment Facility, our country held an international conference on problems of mountain ecosystems. The participants in the conference put forward a proposal to proclaim an international year of the mountains, a proposal which was actively supported by President Akayev in his message to the delegates to the mountain forum and in his letter to the Secretary-General of the United Nations.

At the regular session of the Economic and Social Council in July this year, in Geneva, a resolution proclaiming International Year of Mountains, sponsored by 44 countries, was adopted by consensus. The resolution contains a request to the Secretary-General to present to the regular session of the Economic and Social Council in 1998, after consultations with Governments and with the relevant international, regional and non-governmental organizations, a report on the desirability of proclaiming the International Year of Mountains and other measures to ensure the sustainable development of mountainous countries.

I would like to take this opportunity to appeal to Governments and, above all, to the other sponsors to submit the relevant information for incorporation into a complete and comprehensive report on this question by the Secretary-General. I hope the General Assembly will in turn adopt a consensus decision on this initiative.

At the same time, we believe that it is possible, with support from Governments, to raise the question of drawing up a global programme of action to ensure the sustainable development of countries with mountainous regions, similar to the programme being carried out for small island developing countries.

There can be no doubt that the economic gap between the rich developed countries and the developing world has widened over recent years. The poorest countries are not in a position to take off economically or socially and are continuing to lose the ties that enable them to participate in the world economy. We can assume that if this trend continues, their numbers will continue to grow, and this represents a serious threat to all human development. We need to halt that trend. In this context, in the view of the experts, the most promising approaches are to increase investments in human resources to encourage the implementation of ecologically clean and effective technologies and to reform price structures.

In our view, it is precisely in these areas that United Nations activities, in new conditions, should be stepped up in order to promote economic and social progress. We support the efforts of the Secretary-General to promote stable and sustainable development.

Supporting peace and security is the highest priority task of the United Nations. We place great store by the United Nations peacekeeping activities and pay due tribute to the courage and selflessness of United Nations personnel working in regions of conflict. The efforts of the United Nations Mission of Observers in Tajikistan,

headed by the Special Representative of the Secretary-General, Mr. Gerd Merrem, and the Collective Peacekeeping Forces of the Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS), culminated successfully in Moscow on 27 June 1997 with the signing of the General Agreement on the Establishment of Peace and National Accord in Tajikistan, which opened the way for the country's transition from war to reconstruction and rehabilitation.

As a representative of one of the States that is a guarantor of peace in Tajikistan, I am gratified to note my country's involvement in this event. The mediation efforts of Kyrgyzstan, and of President Akayev himself, helped bring about the important agreement in May this year that laid the way for the General Agreement, namely, the signing of the Protocol on Political Questions. However, as the events in August demonstrated, peace in Tajikistan is still extremely fragile and its survival depends, first and foremost, on the Tajik parties themselves and how faithful they are to the commitments they have made. We are convinced that our Tajik friends will be able to see this through.

The prospects for peace-building in Tajikistan depend to a significant extent on the situation along the Tajik-Afghan border. The armed conflict in Afghanistan is of the greatest concern to the States of the Central Asian region; it fosters the illegal production and trafficking of drugs and is prompting the massive flow of refugees to neighbouring countries. The President and Government of Kyrgyzstan are firmly convinced that there can be only one solution to the Afghan conflict, namely, a political solution. The problem can be solved with the political will of the Afghan parties above all and assistance from neighbouring States that have an influence in the region.

We have not abandoned hope regarding the organization of direct inter-Afghan negotiations under the auspices of the United Nations to discuss conditions for a ceasefire and subsequent measures to bring about national reconciliation. In November 1996, President Akayev put forward an initiative to hold these negotiations in Bishkek. Subsequently, this proposal was repeated at meetings in New York of top officials and experts on Afghanistan. Building on this initiative, in August the President of Kyrgyzstan appealed to the parties to the conflict and Heads of State and Government concerned.

Kyrgyzstan, which does not share a border with Afghanistan and has no interest aside from ensuring regional security, considers the organization of inter-Afghan negotiations under United Nations auspices an integral part of its peaceful policy of good-neighbourly relations and cooperation. Kyrgyzstan is ready to play the impartial role of mediator and make its good offices available to ensure a peaceful settlement of this problem.

Pursuant to its peaceful policy, Kyrgyzstan has been actively promoting in the United Nations since 1995 the idea of establishing a nuclear-weapon-free zone in Central Asia, as reflected in a number of working papers of the 1995 Review and Extension Conference of the Parties to the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons, the Preparatory Committee of the Conference of Parties to the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons to be held in the year 2000 and the Disarmament Commission. We are firmly convinced that the creation of nuclear-weapon-free zones, which is an important confidence-building measure and a positive backdrop to the disarmament process, is helping strengthen peace and security in the region and, in the final analysis, throughout the world.

With the entry into force of the Treaties of Pelindaba and Bangkok, more than 1.7 billion people will be living in zones free of nuclear weapons. Together with Antarctica, this territory will cover practically the entire southern hemisphere. It is essential that we do all we can to support and promote the establishment of nuclear-weapon-free zones. Here, above all, we are hoping for the understanding and support of nuclear-weapon States. At the international conference this September on the establishment of nuclear-weapon-free zones, held in Tashkent, Kyrgyzstan proposed the convening of an advisory meeting of the five Central Asian States, the five nuclear-weapon States that are permanent members of the Security Council, and representatives of the United Nations to discuss practical measures to make this idea a reality. The conference approved the proposal.

Kyrgyzstan is actively participating in peacekeeping activities. The Collective Peacekeeping Forces of CIS in Tajikistan includes one of our battalions. Kyrgyz military personnel in the Central Asian peacekeeping battalion took part in the joint exercises held within the framework of the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) programme Partnership for Peace. Kyrgyzstan is also a member of the United Nations Special Committee on Peacekeeping Operations. We are also interested in training an international peace force, military observers and civilian personnel so that they can participate in peacekeeping operations. I would like to take advantage of this opportunity to ask the United Nations and the

donor countries to give us as much assistance as possible in this area.

In conclusion, I should like to say that this is a decisive session for the United Nations. I should like to express the hope that the interests of individual countries and regions can be reconciled and that they will not prevail over responsibility for the fate of our common Organization. On this positive note, I should like to end my statement.

The President: I now give the floor to the Minister for Foreign Affairs of the Bahamas, Her Excellency The Honourable Janet G. Bostwick.

Mrs. Bostwick (Bahamas): I join previous speakers in congratulating you, Sir, on your election to the presidency of the fifty-second session of the General Assembly. My delegation is satisfied that your vast experience in international affairs and your proven diplomatic skills will guide the work of this session to a successful conclusion. I wish to assure you of my delegation's full support and cooperation in the execution of the duties of your office.

I also wish to express my delegation's gratitude and congratulations to your predecessor, Ambassador Razali Ismail of Malaysia, who presided over our Assembly during the fifty-first session with great vigour, skill and resolve. Having had the honour of serving as a Vice-President of that session, I am particularly appreciative of his noteworthy contributions.

This is my first opportunity in this Assembly to address and congratulate our new Secretary-General, Mr. Kofi Annan. He is, of course, no stranger to any of us, having faithfully served this Organization for so many years. We are confident that he has the vision, ability and determination to lead the United Nations as it prepares to meet the challenges of the new millennium. I wish to assure the Secretary-General of the continued support and cooperation of the Government of the Commonwealth of the Bahamas.

On behalf of the Government and people of the Bahamas, I also wish to pay tribute to our former Secretary-General, Mr. Boutros Boutros-Ghali. The Bahamas particularly wishes to recall and salute his tireless efforts in seeking to restore financial stability to our Organization.

Today, I reiterate the Bahamas' solemn pledge that as we lead our nation into a new millennium the primary focus of our efforts will be directed towards improving the delivery of health care, education and skills training, a reduction in the level of serious crime and unemployment, and the eradication of poverty and poor housing. We are committed to achieving the full empowerment of women and equality among the sexes as we work toward the evolution of a society in which our children will live with hope, a society where there is opportunity for all, where there is respect for human rights, fundamental values and the rule of law.

Mr. Altangerel (Mongolia), Vice-President, took the Chair.

Our efforts on behalf of the Bahamian people also represent our contribution towards the collective efforts which Member States of the United Nations must make to ensure a safe, stable and productive global society so that progress, peace and development can be achieved for all the people represented here. We are therefore committed to assisting in the much needed reform of this world body, so as to enable us to achieve these goals.

One of the greatest threats to quality of life and to productive development worldwide is criminal behaviour. My Government has set as one of its highest priorities the comprehensive reduction and prevention of crime, in all its forms, including drug-trafficking, money-laundering and illegal trafficking in firearms, and, indeed, in human beings. Those who engage in such menacing activities respect no borders. We therefore implore all Member States, irrespective of size or might, to recognize that the most effective means of reducing crime at the national and international levels is through joint and collaborative efforts.

The Government of the Bahamas supports the strengthening of the international legal order against crime. We also hope that the special session on the question of drugs in 1998 will provide new impetus and resolve to combat this particular menace to all of our societies.

My Government reiterates its call to urgently address the growing problem of the traffic in small arms. The Bahamas, neither a manufacturer nor a vendor of arms, urges those countries involved in the production and sale of arms to impose stringent control measures and provide assistance to vulnerable States to reduce the threat of the traffic in arms.

Another concern of the world's nations is the protection of the environment. The Bahamas recognizes and appreciates that conservation and enhancement of the environment are critically important to the well-being of our people, and especially that of future generations. Consequently, our national planning process incorporates community environmental education and the regular monitoring and enforcement of laws for the protection of natural resources and the conservation of habitats. Indeed, during the course of this year, the Government of the Bahamas enacted legislation to protect our physical landscape and prevent the destruction of certain indigenous trees. The expansion of green and open spaces for the benefit of the general population is another key pillar in our environmental policy.

Tourism is the leading industry in the Bahamas and the fastest growing industry in the world. We are all aware, however, that the development of tourism does not always take place in harmony with environmental protection and conservation. Mindful of this fact, the Bahamas, along with its regional partners, seeks to develop strategies, policies and procedures which will ensure that the continued development of the industry is consistent with standards of environmental sustainability. In this vein, the Caribbean Community has adopted a regional position against the transportation of hazardous and radioactive substances through the Caribbean Sea, a concern previously voiced in this forum.

While the concept of sustainable development remains subject to further definition, my Government believes that poverty reduction and social development can and must be achieved in concert with environmental integrity, economic stability and good health. The proper integration of developing economies into the rapidly advancing globalization of world trade will, we believe, mark the measure of our success in these areas. Regrettably, developments over the past decade have not always met expectations.

In spite of the technological revolution of the last decade and the rapid increase in worldwide commerce, the benefits of the globalization of the world's economy have not been evenly distributed. Developing countries continue to be marginalized even as the world's market economy grows at an extraordinary pace.

Globalization can offer great opportunities, but only if it is managed carefully and with more concern for equity, morality and indeed compassion. An enabling environment must be created for all to take full advantage of the new opportunities created by globalization.

The peculiar vulnerability of small islands — their susceptibility to natural disasters, their economy's dependence on primary products, their small human and material resource base — means that small island States have much more at stake in achieving sustainable development. The Bahamas, therefore, attaches great importance to the 1999 review of the Barbados Programme of Action for the Sustainable Development of Small Island Developing States, and calls for the mobilization of external resources for its further implementation. We are also pleased to note that consideration is being given by the United Nations to the possible development of a vulnerability index. We welcome the proposed convening of an expert group meeting later this year to review various proposals, and look forward to the completion of the technical study now in progress.

The development of a mechanism such as the vulnerability index will help to alleviate a concern which the Bahamas has repeatedly expressed in this assembly regarding the persistent use of per capita gross national product as the major measurement of wealth. It is our view that this criterion is an inadequate measurement of development and is often inconsistent with the principles of equity.

The vulnerability of small island States is painfully demonstrated in the unfolding natural disaster on the Caribbean island of Montserrat, where volcanic activity has forever changed the physical, sociological and psychological landscape. Indeed, the viability of the island to provide a base for the livelihood and development of the people of Montserrat is yet to be determined. We, the Government and people of the Bahamas, wish to express our solidarity with, and pledge our continued support to, the people of Montserrat during this particularly difficult time.

We are similarly conscious of the fact that natural disasters affect virtually all the Member States of this Organization, large and small, developed and developing. In recent times, typhoons in South-East Asia, floods in Eastern and Central Europe and in the central states and provinces of the United States and Canada, and earthquakes in South America, and most recently in Italy and Indonesia, have wreaked untold suffering on millions of people.

As we look towards the twenty-first century, we must assess how best this Organization can prepare itself during the next three years to enter into this new era in human history.

Since becoming a Member of the United Nations in 1973, the Commonwealth of the Bahamas has at successive sessions of the Assembly reaffirmed the importance of the United Nations and has conveyed its commitment to work with other Member States in pursuit of the principles and objectives of the Charter.

In this connection, we congratulate the Secretary-General on the important reform proposals which he has presented, and we stand ready to participate in their comprehensive and constructive review during this session.

It is the view of my delegation that reform should have as its end result an improved and more efficient Organization, fully able to meet the demands of the Members which it serves. At the same time, reform would be meaningless if the Organization were not to have a stable financial basis on which to carry out its functions. It is imperative, therefore, that we find a way to overcome the myriad obstacles that have eluded resolution to date in areas such as the reform of the Security Council and the financial situation of the United Nations.

The Bahamas strongly urges all Member States to commit themselves to resolution of the question of Security Council reform at this fifty-second session of the General Assembly. The Bahamas supports the need to expand the Council's membership in both categories. This expansion must, however, pay due regard to the principles of equal representation, the reflection of the universal character of the Organization and the need to correct existing imbalances in the composition of the Council.

In a world confronted daily by press reports on the tragedies of failed efforts to preserve peace between nations — and indeed, between different ethnic and/or religious groups within nations — it is frequently easy to ignore the successes being achieved by the Organization. My Government welcomes the positive work being done by the United Nations in the maintenance of international peace and security. The fact that increasing numbers of countries are willing to cooperate with the United Nations is an indication of how important it is for the Organization to continue the implementation of its mandate in this area.

We note the success stories in areas such as Central America and also in Haiti, where the mandate of the Support Mission has recently been extended. It has always been the contention of the Bahamas Government that too early a withdrawal from Haiti had the potential of derailing the hard-earned gains made in that country. The continuing and recently escalating arrival of many Haitian migrants in the Bahamas is a sobering reminder that a setback in Haiti's difficult march towards political and economic stability could well be destabilizing.

The Government applauds the international community in its successful negotiation of a treaty to ban anti-personnel landmines. Bahamas will sign the treaty and ratify it as soon as possible, and hopes that the Convention will receive full support, particularly from the developed countries of the world. The Bahamas fulfilled its promise made last year to sign the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty, and pledges early ratification, in keeping with its commitment to save succeeding generations from the scourge of nuclear war. These, along with other measures, bring us one step closer to the total elimination of weapons of mass destruction.

The Bahamas is of the view that the United Nations should serve as a pillar of support for the aspirations of its Member States and as a beacon of hope for the destitute of the world. Let us therefore resolve to have this fifty-second session of the General Assembly remembered as a decisive turning point in the work of the Organization. It should be remembered as a session where Member States were able to attain a greater level of understanding, trust, cooperation and a sense of purpose to empower them to deal with the problems affecting the international community.

Address by The Honourable Serge Vohor Rialuth, Prime Minister of the Republic of Vanuatu

The Acting President (*interpretation from Russian*): The Assembly will next hear an address by the Prime Minister of the Republic of Vanuatu.

The Honourable Serge Vohor Rialuth, Prime Minister of the Republic of Vanuatu, was escorted to the rostrum.

The Acting President (*interpretation from Russian*): I have great pleasure in welcoming the Prime Minister of the Republic of Vanuatu, The Honourable Serge Vohor Rialuth, and inviting him to address the General Assembly.

Mr. Vohor Rialuth (Vanuatu) (*interpretation from French*): I am privileged today to be able to congratulate the President, on behalf of the Government of the Republic of Vanuatu, on his election to preside over the Assembly at a period critical to the life of the Organization and its role in future relations between our countries and peoples. I should like to assure him of the full support and cooperation my delegation and my country will lend him and his country, Ukraine, during his mandate.

I should also like to take this opportunity to express the warmest congratulations of the Government and people of Vanuatu to the President of the preceding session, Ambassador Razali Ismail of Malaysia, on the role he played during a period in mankind's history that will be noteworthy for a series of events that were important both on an international level and on various regional levels.

This is also a special opportunity for me to welcome the new Secretary-General of the Organization, Mr. Kofi Annan, and to reiterate the support of the Republic of Vanuatu for him in carrying out his mandate as Secretary-General and, in particular, for the new initiatives he has taken and committed himself to take in the process of dialogue and consultation with all Member States with regard to the future of the Organization.

After more than 50 years of existence, the United Nations today finds itself facing an economic and international political situation that is increasingly complex and particularly more difficult for small developing countries in general, and especially so for the least developed small island countries, like the Republic of Vanuatu.

This situation should be recognized as one of the major challenges to the international community and one that must be dealt with through more committed international cooperation, particularly favourable treatment being given to meet the specific needs of those countries and populations that are its victims.

For the Republic of Vanuatu, the highest priority remains the economic development and social well-being of its population, more than 80 per cent of whom live in rural areas or on islands far from the administrative and commercial centre.

The maintenance of political stability and social harmony in a country depends and will continue to depend, first and foremost, on the country's orientation and economic development process. The rhetoric of certain development partners in trying to make their technical and financial assistance contingent on the political commitment of government leaders and on the maintenance of peace is futile with regard to the Pacific region. Such rhetoric tends rather to challenge the very integrity of these leaders and their commitment to socio-economic development in their respective countries.

Genuine international cooperation must not only be based on the high-priority socio-economic needs of the developing countries and on the interests of the donors; it must above all be anchored firmly in respect for the principles of sovereignty and mutual acknowledgment of the competence of the national political authorities in the exercise of their functions in office. In the framework of its restructuring and in the context of new international challenges, the United Nations is called upon to play a leading role in international cooperation on the basis of these new elements.

In this regard, the Government of Vanuatu most warmly welcomes the Secretary-General's initiative to establish a special development account for the developing country Members. I also wish to recall the importance and role of regional and subregional forums in the process of establishing and strengthening international cooperation. In our part of the world, the South Pacific Forum and the Melanesian Spearhead Group are concrete examples of such cooperation and their initiatives deserve the recognition and support of the international community.

On 24 October 1995, during the commemoration of the fiftieth anniversary of the entry into force of the United Nations Charter, the head of the delegation of Vanuatu declared from this rostrum the support of the Republic of Vanuatu for the reform and rational management of the United Nations system. Today, I reaffirm the support of my Government and congratulate Secretary-General Kofi Annan for the courage and determination that he has demonstrated in drafting and implementing this crucial reform. I fully share the Secretary-General's point of view when he emphasizes in his report that "Reform is not an event; it is a process" (*A/51/950, para. 25*).

It is well known that, throughout today's world, reform is also the sine qua non for a State's sustainable economic and ecological growth and development. Indeed, the global challenges that States must face require the constant review and ongoing reform of development policies and of the institutions of state, in order that the latter may become instruments and tools adapted to and honed for the accomplishment of specific tasks, while contributing to the vision of development that we have set for ourselves.

Seventeen years after attaining its independence, my country, Vanuatu, has made great social and economic strides. However, the disproportionate challenges facing a small island State such as Vanuatu determined us to initiate a reform programme early this year. This global reform programme, as we call it, covers the formal and informal economic sector as well as the public sector, in the broad sense of that word. With our reform, we would equip our country with the means to meet the major development challenges of the twenty-first century and to avoid or reduce the effects and risks, natural and otherwise, that stalk all developing countries and small island States in particular.

This vision of the future that we have crafted for our country requires the creation of dynamic economic conditions in which the private sector is the major protagonist. In most cases, attempts by Governments to act directly in the production of goods and services have purely and simply failed. It also requires the establishment and development of appropriate institutional machinery for technical and financial assistance that will promote the creation, development and growth of private enterprise while placing greater responsibility in the individual.

As the General Assembly is aware, it is not enough to create conditions for the development of a dynamic private sector that is a driving force for growth if we seek development that is economically and ecologically sustainable and fair. Indeed, in our case, we consider the reform and revitalization of the State as another sine qua non of this sustainable and fair development.

Hence, public administration must be made more effective and freed from any adverse political interference, allowing us thus to reestablish transparency, confidence, stability and the security of private investment. Our reform is designed above all to eliminate existing injustices and not to create others, which would represent failure and backsliding. With our reform, we seek equitable development that takes into account the development needs of our children and of generations to come. The redistribution of the benefits of reform and the situation of women, children and other disadvantaged groups must be seriously considered in the implementation of this reform.

Guaranteed fairness requires the assignment of the highest priority to education through the allocation of available resources. Only an up-to-date and high-quality education will equip each individual with the necessary skills and allow him to satisfy his basic needs and maintain his dignity.

It must be clear to all that the decision of the Economic and Social Council on 18 July to graduate my country, the Republic of Vanuatu, from the list of least developed countries was a surprise. I take this opportunity to reiterate the position of the Government of Vanuatu, as reflected in the official correspondence between my Government and the Secretary-General, the President of the Economic and Social Council and a certain number of friendly countries Members of the United Nations.

While recognizing the sensitive nature of this question, the Government of Vanuatu solemnly calls on this Assembly to consider putting off the question of graduation to the year 2000, when the indicators for identifying least developed countries will be finalized by the Committee for Development Planning.

My Government recently launched a global reform programme and will need the full support of the donor community in order to implement our reform and give our country the infrastructure indispensable to our growth. Similarly, during the Global Conference on the Sustainable Development of Small Island Developing States held in Barbados, it was decided to develop indicators for the vulnerability index appropriate to this category of United Nations Member.

In this context, we consider the decision of the Committee for Development Planning to be premature and in no way reflecting the spirit of that United Nations resolution. Moreover, with more than 80 per cent of our population living in the countryside on food-producing subsistence agriculture; a well-paid expatriate population; and official development assistance equal to the State's annual budget and representing 20 per cent of our gross domestic product, we feel that the Committee for Development Planning's decision can only stem from a lack of adequate information.

We do not understand why least developed countries in the same situation as Vanuatu are treated differently and demand that we receive exactly the same treatment as any that, like us, meets two of the current identifying indicators for least developed countries, as laid down in the Committee's report.

(spoke in English)

As recognized by the Rio Conference and the Global Conference on the Sustainable Development of Small Island Developing States, held in Barbados, the issue of

environment and its close association with the concept of development has become highly complex and sensitive.

The convening of international conferences and the formulation of international treaties such as the Framework Convention on Climate Change are a clear demonstration of the significance of environmental issues in our development efforts.

Small island countries like Vanuatu and other Pacific island countries have taken some tough decisions to introduce restrictive measures internally in support of the international call for environment protection. They have also committed their Governments and nations to the principle of instituting a legally binding instrument which would guarantee the reduction of greenhouse gas emissions to an internationally accepted level.

To the Pacific island countries, particularly the low-lying nations, a failure to fully address the issue at hand and to reach an acceptable solution could put into question the commitment of the international community, and could constitute a great security risk for our islands and our future generations.

The Republic of Vanuatu recognizes the United Nations initiatives and engagement in the globalization and liberalization of trade. The building up of the multilateral trading system since 1995 is a manifestation and reflection of the United Nations effort and desire to create a global and uniform trading environment that is conducted and based on the new rules and obligations provided in the Marrakesh Declaration.

My country has embarked on a wider process of consultations to seek membership of the World Trade Organization (WTO). The challenges and opportunities offered by this new regime are considerable, and therefore weaker economies like ours require time to adjust to their economic policies in order to accommodate the prescribed obligations and requirements of the multilateral trading system.

In this context, we would like to develop a common approach through the United Nations system, as well as the European Union, as our partners, in coming to terms with the demands and obligations of the newly established multilateral trading system. While all of us, in particular small islands and least developed States, recognize the need to come to terms with the World Trade Organization, we cannot and should not allow ourselves to be unduly pressured by its demands on these matters where we need to protect our trade preferences and interests.

What we perceive to be negative and of less relevance to us in the World Trade Organization must be changed according to our interests. There needs to be scope for all the small and vulnerable States to be accorded sufficient time to undertake reforms in trade and investment competitiveness with a view to creating a positive impact on the economy, particularly in their efforts to source private capital flows and foreign direct investment.

Allow me at this point to refer to the future relations between the 71 African, Caribbean and Pacific States (ACP) and the European Union when the current fourth Lomé Convention expires in the year 2000. After some 25 years, it is important to take stock and reflect on the challenges, opportunities and weaknesses of the Convention by reviewing the existing framework of cooperation. From a wider ACP perspective, there is generally a stronger desire and willingness to retain and strengthen the existing framework of cooperation in the areas of political, economic, trade and development assistance.

I would like to take this opportunity to strongly urge the international community, through this fifty-second session of the General Assembly, to recognize that there are realities which continue to warrant the need for continuity of the partnership between the ACP States and the European Union beyond the year 2000.

(spoke in French)

In conclusion, allow me to reaffirm my Government's support for the process of reforming our great Organization which was begun by Mr. Kofi Annan in order to enable it to deal successfully with the challenges of the twenty-first century.

The Acting President (*interpretation from Russian*): On behalf of the General Assembly, I wish to thank the Prime Minister of the Republic of Vanuatu for the statement he has just made.

The Honourable Mr. Serge Vohor Rialuth, Prime Minister of the Republic of Vanuatu, was escorted from the rostrum.

The meeting rose at 12.05 p.m.

United Nations A/52/PV.28

General Assembly

Fifty-second Session

Official Records

28th plenary meeting
Tuesday, 7 October 1997, 3 p.m.
New York

President: Mr. Udovenko . . . . . (Ukraine)

The meeting was called to order at 3.05 p.m.

Agenda item 9 *(continued)*

General debate

The President: The Assembly will first hear an address by the Minister for Foreign Affairs of Papua New Guinea, His Excellency the Honourable Mr. Kilroy Genia, M.P.

Mr. Genia (Papua New Guinea): On behalf of the people and Government of Papua New Guinea, I wish to join previous speakers in conveying our felicitations to you, Sir, on your election to the presidency of the fifty-second session of the General Assembly. The Papua New Guinea delegation is confident that you will guide this session to a successful conclusion.

May I also take this opportunity to express my sincere gratitude to your predecessor, His Excellency Ambassador Razali Ismail of Malaysia, for his energetic, visionary and outstanding stewardship in facilitating the work of the fifty-first session of the General Assembly.

At the fiftieth anniversary of the United Nations, world leaders reaffirmed their resolute commitment to uphold the purposes and principles enshrined in the Charter of the United Nations. They pledged their support for the pivotal role of the United Nations in building international cooperation and partnership in development and in engendering trust and confidence among nations and peoples in order to foster world peace and security.

No human institution is perfect, and the United Nations is no exception. It has nonetheless withstood the test of time. The shortcomings of our collective endeavours have necessitated efforts for constructive reform and measures directed at strengthening and reinvigorating the United Nations, our paramount Organization.

Papua New Guinea has always believed, and continues to believe, in the utility of the United Nations, and in this context commends the Secretary-General, His Excellency Mr. Kofi Annan, for his bold initiative in proposing for our consideration a comprehensive reform package aimed at making the United Nations more responsive to the changing international situation.

In his proposal, the Secretary-General emphasized that the principal objective of the reform is not only to make the United Nations efficient and effective but also to improve its delivery system and operational coherency through management innovations. Papua New Guinea fully supports these principal objectives of the proposed reform package. The overall direction of reform should and must be tailored towards strengthening the United Nations system in order to better serve the needs and aspirations of its Members. It makes eminent sense for us to move from merely debating issues to determining practical steps and strategies that would make our Organization more responsive and capable of meeting the ever-changing challenges of globalization and modernization as we enter the next century.

97-86176 (E)

This record contains the original text of speeches delivered in English and interpretations of speeches delivered in the other languages. Corrections should be submitted to original speeches only. They should be incorporated in a copy of the record and be sent under the signature of a member of the delegation concerned, *within one month of the date of the meeting*, to the Chief of the Verbatim Reporting Service, Room C-178. Corrections will be issued after the end of the session in a consolidated corrigendum.

These changes are necessary to enhance public confidence in the United Nations and to improve its capacity to build partnership between Governments and civil society. This will enable the Organization to meet the daunting challenges of economic development faced by our global community and those posed by the political and ideological differences afflicting nations today.

The proposed reforms stem in part from the need to ensure the operational viability and sustainability of the activities of the United Nations. Papua New Guinea is fully aware of the predicament of the United Nations — starved of much needed financial resources for its operations to the point of being insolvent. We cannot allow such a situation to persist.

We agree with and applaud the role of the Organization in development — in framing structures and policies that will enhance the technological capacities of developing countries and improve their effective participation in international markets, including their access to credit and their ability to acquire information technologies.

Regarding priorities, Papua New Guinea is gravely concerned at the lack of full implementation of a number of initiatives and programmes undertaken by the United Nations, in particular with respect to such critical areas as the empowerment of women, child care, the protection of our global environment, poverty eradication and sustainable development.

It is critical to be aware that organizational reform alone cannot guarantee the effective delivery of services. The United Nations needs more than bureaucratic and technocratic innovations. It needs our concerted action. It is therefore imperative that we as Members commit ourselves to encouraging the development of genuine partnerships and seriously take urgent and practical measures to remove the obstacles and barriers that exist between developed and developing countries.

In addition to its traditional role in the maintenance of peace and security, this paramount international body must be equipped and strengthened to do more in framing international treaties and standards and in encouraging international norms and practices that will bring about equitable economic development and social justice for all peoples. Equity and justice in all spheres of development should be our ultimate objective.

Consistent with the reform process, we see merit and value in revising the regional groupings within the context of the United Nations to reflect present geopolitical realities. In this regard, we support the calls made by New Zealand and others in the South Pacific region for the consideration of their inclusion in the Asia-Pacific grouping.

I now turn to the question of the reform of the Security Council, which is an important decision-making organ of the United Nations on global security concerns. As a member of the Non-Aligned Movement, Papua New Guinea fully supports the declaration adopted by the non-aligned Ministers at the twelfth Ministerial Conference of the Movement of Non-Aligned Countries — held in New Delhi, India, in April 1997 — and reaffirmed more recently in New York on 26 September last. The composition and *modus operandi* of the Security Council must reflect the changes that have taken place since its formative years, and, more importantly, must mirror current geopolitical and economic realities.

Papua New Guinea believes that the reform and expansion of the Security Council should be guided by the principle of the sovereign equality of States and equitable geographical distribution. It should also take into consideration the need for transparency, accountability and democratization of the working methods and procedures of the Security Council, including its decision-making processes.

The reform of the Security Council should be comprehensive and based on universal values in order to enhance its legitimacy. More importantly, the reformed Security Council should allow for equitable representation by developing countries. On the question of permanent membership, we reiterate our position on the inclusion of Japan and Germany from the industrialized States and also support the fair representation of developing countries as additional permanent members, particularly those that have the capacity and ability to contribute to world affairs.

Papua New Guinea strongly supports the view that there should be no distinction in terms of the privileges accorded to permanent members, particularly in relation to the exercise of the veto power. In other words, all permanent members of a reformed Security Council should enjoy the same privileges so as to maintain geopolitical equity and balance.

It is indeed ironic to note in this Assembly the contradictory positions of some of our members, who purport to be champions and defenders of human rights issues and yet continue to maintain colonial situations that directly deny genuine democratic representation and the rights of people to govern themselves in a manner consistent with their political aspirations.

Having achieved decolonization in many parts of the globe — of which the United Nations can be proud — we would be failing in our noble duty if we were to ignore the concerns and aspirations of the peoples of the remaining 17 Non-Self-Governing Territories, some of them in the South Pacific, which are still struggling to establish their own political autonomy, and even to exercise their right of self-determination. Given the importance we attach to this issue, Papua New Guinea is gravely concerned that recent initiatives in relation to the United Nations programme on decolonization have seriously eroded the importance of the political essence of that programme and have impacted negatively on it. We hope that this anomaly can be resolved quickly and amicably.

Papua New Guinea wishes to recall that many of us represented here would not have taken our place in this forum had we not been allowed the opportunity to exercise that right. We therefore urge this body to adopt a more serious and aggressive approach to the implementation of the decolonization programme of the United Nations. At the recent meeting of the South Pacific Forum in Rarotonga, Cook Islands, the States members of the South Pacific Forum reaffirmed their support for the decolonization process.

The Non-Self-Governing Territory of New Caledonia continues to be of great interest to the South Pacific Forum, and we have over the years followed developments there in relation to the Matignon Accords. Early this year we mounted, with the help of the Government of France and the authorities in New Caledonia, a Forum ministerial mission to the Territory. We are pleased to note that all parties to the Matignon Accords appear to be satisfied with the progress made in implementing the Accords. Papua New Guinea continues to recognize the right of the people of New Caledonia to self-determination and urges all parties in the Territory to maintain their commitment to reaching a negotiated solution as a successor arrangement to the 1988 Matignon Accords. This negotiated successor solution must take into account the wishes of all communities, including concerns on the changing demographic composition of New Caledonia.

The economic prosperity and political developments and changes in the Asia-Pacific region continue to be of interest to Papua New Guinea. As a special observer of the Association of South-East Asian Nations (ASEAN), we were heartened by the initiatives taken by ASEAN leaders to bring the belligerent parties in Cambodia to the table for urgent negotiations for peace and security. It is our hope that the people of that ancient civilization will return to their daily lives in a peaceful and secure environment once more.

The ongoing difficulties in the Korean peninsula and the competing territorial claims in the South China Sea continue to concern my Government, because they all have a bearing on the overall maintenance of regional and international security, as well as on other forms of cooperation.

While we do not understate the importance and value of our diplomatic relations with the People's Republic of China, we have, however, on a number of occasions urged both Beijing and Taipei to resolve their fundamental differences with the aim of maintaining an amicable coexistence.

In view of the changing international climate characterized by global interdependence, it is important for all peace-loving States to make every effort to minimize areas of hostility that could seriously undermine international peace and security. The United Nations therefore has an obligation to assist in maintaining a secure global environment in which economic growth and other forms of development can continue to thrive for the benefit and common good of all peoples of the world.

In its efforts to attain economic prosperity, Papua New Guinea has had to engage all economic entities in our trade and commercial relations. Consistent with our obligation to assure our people of a better future, we intend to expand our economic ties with trading partners that have demonstrated their willingness to assist without our having to compromise various aspects of our existing relations with our partners.

It is in this regard that we recognize Taiwan as a dynamic economy and trading partner without compromising our one-China policy. Since Taiwan participates in such organizations as the Asian Development Bank, the Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation Council, the World Trade Organization and the South Pacific Forum as a dialogue partner, I cannot

see any reason why we should not deal directly with Taiwan on trade and economic matters.

The world has witnessed once again the derailment of the peace process in the Middle East. We call on the leaders of both Israel and Palestine to cooperate with United Nations efforts to reach an amicable solution to avert further violence, and to focus on the path to peace. Papua New Guinea strongly believes that the rights of the Palestinian people over their homeland and their freedom to establish their own Government and identity are paramount among the conditions that could lead to enduring peace.

We are encouraged to see positive signs of appeasement in Rwanda, Burundi and the Democratic Republic of the Congo. Nevertheless, given the tense situation that exists in that region, we urge those in positions of authority, including all leaders in that part of the world, to resolve their differences peacefully to prevent further bloodshed. In this context, we are heartened to see the Organization of African Unity playing a critical role in the endeavour to bring about peace and stability in the Great Lakes region. The crisis in Sierra Leone needs urgent attention, and we join the Secretary-General's call to the leaders of the military junta and support his continuing efforts to encourage them to respect the rule of law and make every effort to restore democracy in that country.

On the regional front, Papua New Guinea is taking a major initiative in setting up the Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation Council (APEC) regional centre in Port Moresby. We would like to offer our gratitude for the support given by the States members of the South Pacific Forum in our efforts to set up this centre. The objective of the APEC centre is to assist in the area of capacity-building in the economies of 13 small island developing States in our region as we prepare to meet the challenges of globalization and liberalization. We are also grateful for the support provided by the United Nations Development Programme.

At the recent summit of the Heads of the South Pacific Forum countries, the leaders reaffirmed our commitment to maintaining a nuclear-free zone in the South Pacific consistent with the overall objectives of the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons. We welcomed the adoption of the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty and reiterated our support for banning the transboundary movement of radioactive and other hazardous wastes in the region, and in particular for the Vienna Convention on Civil Liability for Nuclear Damage and the draft Convention on Supplementary Funding.

In this context, we welcome the ratification by the United Kingdom of the protocols to the South Pacific Nuclear-Free Zone Treaty, known as the Treaty of Rarotonga. We are still hopeful that the United States of America will do likewise, and call upon it to do so at the earliest possible opportunity.

At the last session of the General Assembly, we sought and forged new agreements, including our relationship with the Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons. We also expressed our support for an international convention to ban all anti-personnel mines, and have participated in the Ottawa process, most recently at Oslo. Like other members of this body, Papua New Guinea is making the necessary arrangements to become a party to that historic Treaty when it opens for signature later this year.

In a few months we will usher in the International Year of the Ocean. Like other South Pacific Forum countries, Papua New Guinea has an affinity for the sea which cannot be overstated. It is, for the greater part, the source of our livelihood.

We urge the United Nations to continue to play a major role in ensuring global awareness of sustainable use, conservation and management of marine resources. In this regard, we call on the international community to coordinate efforts to implement the priorities agreed upon during the special session of the General Assembly on the environment and sustainable development. We are gravely concerned that much of the outcome of the special session will remain the province of historians and academics, if not given practical effect. We urge that greater attention be given to the special needs and concerns of the small island developing countries.

An environmental issue of great importance and relevance to Papua New Guinea and other small island States in the South Pacific region is the impact of greenhouse gas emissions, which are causing rising sea levels and changing weather patterns in many member countries, especially low lying island nations.

This issue was given priority attention at the recent South Pacific Forum meeting in Rarotonga, Cook Islands, where the Forum countries expressed deep concerns

about the insufficient progress made by the countries which contribute significantly to greenhouse gas emissions.

As a member of the South Pacific Forum, Papua New Guinea strongly urges all countries concerned to make additional efforts in meeting commitments under the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (FCCC). We also urge all parties to the FCCC to consider fully the Alliance of Small Island States (AOSIS) draft protocol during the ongoing negotiations, especially at the forthcoming Kyoto conference, in order to pursue the greatest possible level of net reduction in global greenhouse gas emissions by means of a legally binding protocol or other legal instrument.

On Bougainville, let me reassure this body that Papua New Guinea, as I stated earlier this year in the United Nations Commission on Human Rights, remains fully committed to a peaceful and enduring resolution of the crisis. It is absolutely clear that the people of Papua New Guinea, including the majority of Bougainvillians, want peace and will pursue a peaceful solution by every available means. As in the past, we will continue to give the people of Bougainville every opportunity to participate fully in the reconciliation process.

My Government is mindful of the effects of the crisis on our region, particularly of the spillover effects on our close neighbours. We wish to take this opportunity to thank the neighbouring countries in our region for their assistance in the peace process. I would like to acknowledge the contributions of Australia and, in particular, New Zealand, in initiating and facilitating the peace conference of all Bougainvillian leaders which resulted in the signing of the Burnham Declaration last July. A follow-up meeting — Burnham Talks II — between Bougainvillian leaders and representatives of Papua New Guinea's Government is currently under way in New Zealand. We are optimistic and confident that we can resolve the crisis within the framework of the Papua New Guinea Constitution.

Let me also take this opportunity to thank, on behalf of my Government and people, the previous and current Governments of the Solomon Islands and their people for their tolerance and understanding, particularly when they have had to bear the full weight of the spillover effects. I want to thank them also for agreeing with us to put in place in the last 12 months two important bilateral treaties: the comprehensive framework treaty guiding bilateral relations and the basic border agreement. These treaties set the parameters within which our bilateral relations are conducted, including the legal mechanisms for consultation and dialogue relating to a more effective management of our common border, which is critical to the containment of the Bougainville crisis, including its spillover effects.

My Government also offers its gratitude to the leaders of the South Pacific Forum for recognizing Bougainville as an integral part of Papua New Guinea, and for their acknowledgment of the peace efforts concerning Bougainville by all parties involved, including Bougainvillians and their leaders, the Papua New Guinea Government, and the Governments of the Solomon Islands, Australia and New Zealand.

In conclusion, let me echo what other speakers have said before me. As we prepare to meet the dawn of the next millennium, let us commit ourselves to building genuine partnerships in development that will ensure a secure environment for our present and future generations.

We do not and should not expect guarantees, but we shall look far and wide in our search for safeguards. We do not want and shall not seek handouts; however, we demand equity and greater participation to foster and expand opportunities for our peoples.

It is only through the development of genuine partnerships and the enhancement of equity and justice in global trade and investments that we can improve the socio-economic conditions of our people, ensure their prosperity, and guarantee the safety of our global environment, without which there is no hope for the attainment of enduring peace in our societies today and in future. Only when such peace has been attained can we truly say that we have lived up to our obligations, for the interests and common good of humanity.

The President: I now call on the Minister-Secretary General of the Presidency of Mauritania, His Excellency Mr. Ahmed Ould Minnih.

Mr. Ould Minnih (Mauritania) (*interpretation from Arabic*): At the outset, I would like to say how pleased we are to congratulate you, Sir, on your assumption of the presidency of the fifty-second session of the United Nations General Assembly. We are convinced that your great experience and wisdom will promote the success of this session. I can assure you of the cooperation of the delegation of the Islamic Republic of Mauritania in reaching the results to which we all aspire.

I take this opportunity also to express our gratitude to and esteem for your predecessor, Mr. Razali Ismail, for the great efforts made and the positive results obtained during his term of office as President of the past session.

I should also like to express our appreciation to Mr. Kofi Annan, Secretary-General of the United Nations, for the tireless efforts he has made since his assumption to his high office to promote the universality of the United Nations and to strengthen its credibility and capacity to discharge its responsibilities despite a difficult international situation.

In this context, we welcome the initiative taken by the Secretary-General in submitting an outline for reform, which includes a number of provisions that could improve the functioning of the Organization. An in-depth study of this outline will undoubtedly facilitate its adoption by all members of the international community.

While the end of the cold war has created a favourable climate for the emergence of a new era of international dialogue and cooperation, the improvement of the economic conditions of developing countries remains an urgent need.

Indeed, with the growing trend towards globalization and liberalization in international trade, the developing countries are facing a number of obstacles, including slower growth, falling export revenues, and a reduction in the volume of investments and in official development assistance. All of this may prevent these countries from becoming part of the global economy and further marginalize them if the international community does not mobilize swiftly to provide them with the aid they need to meet these challenges.

The increase in the volume of debt is another obstacle to the economic and social development efforts undertaken by these countries for the benefit of their peoples. In this respect the 1996 report of the World Bank notes that the burden of debt in many of the least developed countries has reached such a level that it is virtually impossible for them to continue with their economic reforms, which are of crucial importance; and that this situation is exacerbated by the fact that in 1996 official development assistance, which can reduce the effect of indebtedness, fell to its lowest level in real terms in 23 years.

International strategies do not seem to have succeeded adequately in easing the burden of debt in the developing countries, which is why more effective solutions, such as increasing official development assistance, must be found so that these countries' development priorities can be financed.

Despite the fragility of the international economic situation, progress has been made in various areas due to efforts by the United Nations to promote international cooperation and to define policies and strategies capable of meeting the economic, social and environmental challenges that confront the world today. For instance, several important international meetings and conferences have been organized during the past five years under the auspices of the United Nations, resulting in some decisions and undertakings relating to the main issues of development that seek to promote international cooperation and coordination for development.

I am referring in particular to the World Summit for Children, held in New York; the Earth Summit, held in Rio de Janeiro; the World Conference on Human Rights, held in Vienna; the International Conference on Population and Development, held in Cairo; the World Summit for Social Development, held in Copenhagen; the Fourth World Conference on Women, held in Beijing; the World Food Summit, held in Rome; the second United Nations Conference on Human Settlements (Habitat II), held in Istanbul; and the nineteenth special session of the General Assembly, devoted to the overall review and appraisal of the implementation of Agenda 21, which took place in New York last June.

These initiatives attest to the determination of the United Nations to take into account the concerns and interests of the international community with regard to a whole range of development issues. The United Nations should continue on this path and seek to ensure implementation of the decisions adopted.

Under the enlightened guidance of its President, His Excellency Mr. Maaouya Ould Sid'Ahmed Taya, the Islamic Republic of Mauritania has completed the process of establishing constitutional institutions within the framework of a democratic process that began 11 years ago. This ensures that these institutions will be able to function normally within a multi-party system and a State based on the rule of law. My country is proud to state that we do not hold any political prisoners.

Fundamental freedoms, such as freedom of expression and a multi-party system, as well as trade union freedoms, are guaranteed and enjoyed by 20 political parties and a large number of organizations and

trades unions that can pursue their activities in complete freedom. Likewise, there are dozens of newspapers and magazines that reflect various political and intellectual sensibilities.

Furthermore, in keeping with the provisions of our Constitution, the two Houses of Parliament have been replenished, and for the second time presidential elections, set for 12 December this year, are being prepared in a climate of freedom, peace and stability.

A global strategy that seeks to raise the level of our people's economic and social development and to consolidate democracy has been implemented. This goes hand in hand with the democratic process and is in keeping with the following comments of the President of the Republic, His Excellency Mr. Maaouya Ould Sid'Ahmed Taya:

> "We are seeking to build a modern society capable of accompanying the world on its march forward and of assimilating scientific and technological information; a society aware of the challenges of our time and working to meet those challenges".

In this context, the promotion of women's rights and the campaign against illiteracy figure prominently in our development programmes. A sustained effort is also being made to provide as many of our citizens as possible with access to education, jobs and health services, thereby guaranteeing them a better standard of living. The results obtained in this regard are satisfactory. Indeed, the enrolment rate in our schools has reached 86 per cent and health care coverage for our people has been significantly extended towards meeting the goal defined by the World Health Organization, which is health for all by the year 2000. Drinking water supply systems have been built in several regions, and the main cities of the country now have electricity.

Within the framework of a huge programme to provide access to remote towns in the interior of the country, several new roads have been built, and a modern telecommunications system now covers the entire country.

These important achievements attest to our firm desire to combat underdevelopment in all its forms, relying first on our own resources and then on the support of our development partners.

I should like here to express my gratitude to all brotherly and friendly countries and international organizations and agencies, as well as to non-governmental organizations, for their support of my country's efforts in this area.

One of the positive features of international relations today, which has led to the strengthening of democracy and respect for human rights in several regions of the world, is the international community's effort to consolidate fundamental principles such as transparency, the representative character of power, the primacy of law, and the independence of the judiciary.

While we can be satisfied with the significant progress made in this area, we should not lose sight of the fact that democracy cannot be limited to the narrow confines of each individual country; it must extend to relations between nations. In this respect we attach particular importance to the efforts made by the Open-ended Working Group on the Question of Equitable Representation on and Increase in the Membership of the Security Council. We also hope that these efforts will lead to greater transparency in the decision-making processes of the Security Council as well as to improved working methods.

In a different area, we need to adopt a new form of preventive diplomacy that is capable of preventing conflicts and the human tragedies that result from them, such as those we have witnessed recently and those we see today and yet are unable to resolve.

The Islamic Republic of Mauritania expresses its profound concern at the difficulties encountered in the peace process and at the negative developments in the region of the Middle East, which result from non-compliance with agreements concluded and commitments undertaken in accordance with the established timetable.

My country believes that there can be no just and lasting peace in the Middle East unless Israel withdraws from all the occupied Palestinian territories, including Al-Quds, the Syrian Golan and southern Lebanon, and unless the Palestinian people regain their right to create an independent State on their territory.

My country also calls for the taking of the steps necessary for the resumption of the peace negotiations among all the parties concerned. We are convinced that Security Council resolutions 242 (1967), 338 (1973) and

425 (1978) and the principle of "land for peace" remain the basis of a comprehensive, just and lasting peace.

Furthermore, we call upon the two sponsors of the peace process to redouble their efforts to ensure that the chance for peace is not lost and the hopes for a new era of cooperation and concord, in which the potential of the region is dedicated to economic development and social promotion, are not dashed.

In this context, my country calls for the lifting of the embargo placed on the Palestinian people, and we ask the international community to mobilize the necessary resources to finance the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East so that it can do its job properly.

In the Gulf region, the aftermath of the war continues to impede the normalization of the situation. The Islamic Republic of Mauritania, while reaffirming its dedication to international law and its commitment to respecting the principles thereof, again states its rejection of any violation of Kuwait's independence, its territorial integrity and the security of its citizens, and calls for a rapid solution to the question of Kuwaiti prisoners.

We also reaffirm our steadfast position that no measures should be taken that threaten Iraq's unity and territorial integrity, and we call for the lifting of the embargo imposed against the Iraqi people, so that an end can be put to their suffering. We hope that the implementation of the resolution regarding "oil for food" can help to achieve this.

Still on the same region, we reiterate our support for the United Arab Emirates in its desire to regain its sovereignty over the islands of Greater Tumb, Lesser Tumb and Abu Mussa.

In the Arab Maghreb, my country is acting in cooperation with its brothers for the attainment of the aspirations of the States of the Union of the Arab Maghreb.

On the subject of Western Sahara, my country welcomed with great satisfaction the agreement which was concluded on 16 September last in Houston in the United States under the auspices of Mr. James Baker III, the Personal Envoy of the Secretary-General, and which deals with the main issues that have hampered the implementation of the settlement plan for Western Sahara worked out by the United Nations in coordination with the Organization of African Unity (OAU). The Islamic Republic of Mauritania reaffirms its willingness to do everything it can to promote implementation of the plan for the settlement of this dispute.

Furthermore, we call for the lifting of the embargo imposed against the Libyan Arab Jamahiriya, and we hope that the efforts of the League of Arab States and of the OAU to find a peaceful solution based on the principles of international law, a solution that will put an end to this situation so detrimental to the Libyan people and all other Maghreb peoples, will be given favourable consideration.

On the question of Africa we hope that the meeting of the Security Council at the ministerial level held two weeks ago to consider the situation in Africa will contribute to the achievement of appropriate solutions to the problems of the continent.

My country also wishes to reaffirm its commitment to the principles of dialogue and negotiation as the only way to overcome crises and conflicts and to defuse pockets of tension which exist in several parts of the continent. Accordingly, my country renews its support for efforts to revitalize the central organ of the OAU that deals with prevention, management and settlement of conflicts in Africa.

As for the Federal Islamic Republic of the Comoros, my country hopes that the efforts undertaken by the League of Arab States and the OAU will contribute to the settlement of the crisis in that country.

We hope also that in Somalia the parties concerned will have recourse to constructive dialogue to reach a solution that will guarantee harmony and stability.

In regard to the Republic of Congo, my country hopes that a peaceful solution that will restore security and stability will be found.

We hope that there will again be a normal situation in Sierra Leone, in keeping with international law.

The United Nations is today required more than ever before to react more vigorously to the problems facing the international community. The end of the cold war, and the international community's awareness of the importance of coordination and dialogue, are positive factors for giving our Organization the necessary momentum to enable it to meet the challenges and to establish the bases for a new international order founded

on the principles of justice and solidarity and guaranteeing the maintenance of peace and security throughout the world.

There is no doubt also that being aware of the magnitude of the challenges and the need to pool our efforts to meet them is the best way to restore our hope of moving closer to the fulfilment of the ideal that was consecrated at the ceremonies commemorating the fiftieth anniversary of the Organization:

> "We the peoples of the United Nations united for a better world".

The President: I now call on the Minister for Foreign Affairs of Eritrea, His Excellency Mr. Haile Weldensae.

Mr. Weldensae (Eritrea): Allow me at the outset, Sir, to congratulate you on your election as President of the fifty-second session of the General Assembly. Eritrea joins in the expressions of recognition of your attributes by previous speakers. You are presiding over an Assembly session that will be remembered for focusing not only on crucial international issues but also on the reform of our Organization. While wishing you success in your leadership, I also assure you of the full support and cooperation of the Eritrean delegation.

I also seize this opportunity to pay tribute to the Permanent Representative of Malaysia, His Excellency Ambassador Razali Ismail, for the way he conducted the work of the fifty-first session, and to thank him for his far-sighted proposal on the reform of the Security Council.

Likewise, I wish to extend sincere gratitude to the new Secretary-General of the United Nations, Mr. Kofi Annan, for the efficient and dynamic way he is discharging his duties.

We are meeting at a critical juncture of history. After almost 50 years the dark and ominous clouds of world conflict no longer loom threateningly over the horizon. Those grim days are over. In the last few years we have taken great strides towards making the world safer for future generations.

The road to disarmament has been made easier with the signing of the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty (CTBT) by 146 world leaders in 1996. The world has also accelerated efforts to eliminate anti-personnel landmines. More importantly, there seem to be clear indications of a great change in values, attitudes and perceptions which will foster the creation of cooperative relationships among the States of the world, thus promoting new perspectives of common policies to solve mutual problems.

True, we should, at the same time, remember that old and new conflicts continue to plague the world. Thus, destabilizing factors such as the marginalization of nations and peoples, transnational crimes, the use of violence and the threat of violence as instruments of national policy still haunt our planet. In addition, old and new conflicts in Europe, Asia and Africa seem to threaten or reverse the global gains achieved in the last few years. It is hoped that these will be the exceptions rather than the rule and, as relics of the past, will be swept away in the near future. In this respect, it is encouraging to note that the Security Council held, during the second week of the General Assembly, an unprecedented ministerial meeting on the security situation in Africa. This will encourage the United Nations to play a more meaningful and credible role in supporting regional initiatives to solve regional conflicts.

Thus, perhaps for the first time, there is an opportunity to undertake a common, realistic and critical reappraisal of our involvement in world affairs and to come to an agreement on the role of the United Nations. The Members of the United Nations, both old and new, must welcome this opportunity to demonstrate their readiness to tackle these new global problems and the full intent of the contribution they can make to empower the United Nations to become a strong and relevant force in international relations.

In recent years, there have been persistent requests for a change in the structure and mission of the United Nations. There is undoubtedly need for reform. The most obvious reason is the fact that today the Organization remains essentially the same entity that was created over 50 years ago in San Francisco. Its membership has more than tripled since then, with at least two dozen new States joining since 1990. Yet, its structure remains essentially the same. Also, the problems that face the world are so radically different that there is a dire need for the reorganization of priorities in the Organization's mission.

Although it is true that different States, or groups of States, will have different perceptions of what needs to be changed, the following are, in the opinion of my delegation, the most important issues that must be taken into consideration if change is to be meaningful and credible.

First, there are only two major challenges confronting the world today: development and security. These are, of course, interdependent. It is evident that there will not be any development without peace. Yet, without development that improves the livelihood of people, the task of guaranteeing peace will be extremely difficult. The assaults on these two problems must be made simultaneously, and all of our actions should be taken with an eye to solving both. Hitherto, emphasis has been on security to the detriment of development, with catastrophic results. Since the reason for this disparity, namely the cold war, no longer exists, it should not be too difficult to put a little more emphasis on development. Lately, however, there has been a growing emphasis on the political rather than the economic aspects of development — that is, on democracy and human rights. True, people everywhere are clamouring for the right to be free from dictatorships and to participate meaningfully in decisions which affect their lives, and they must be strongly supported in this. However, it must also be realized that the meaning of human rights and democracy is being challenged and questioned, and they are being given different interpretations. Whatever the case, any effort to apply standards of democracy and human rights, however defined, will not be successful unless the root causes of underdevelopment and poverty are effectively addressed. Any reform of the United Nations should, therefore, empower it to promote sustained economic growth in developing countries even more energetically. Only this will help to develop good governance, that is, democracy and human rights and stability, and will militate against inter- and intra-State conflicts.

Secondly, the United Nations belongs to all of its Members. Thus, the increased participation of all of its Members in its activities is a right that must be exercised to safeguard against the arbitrary abuse of its powers and functions. Such a development would enhance immeasurably its effectiveness as a guarantor of peace. It is hardly possible to speak sincerely of a universal organization whose major decisions, taken by a few, will be binding upon the rest of the world. It is no longer acceptable to the rest of the world that a relatively small number of States, even after the proposed increase of membership in its major decision-making organs, should, in the name of international peace and security, dictate the agenda of the United Nations or impose a system of international conduct. Indeed, it is sad to note that the same countries that make democracy a condition in their foreign policies are adamant about maintaining an elite club of States in the consideration of Security Council membership.

In any case, any future system must eschew cold-war doctrines and principles and give equal emphasis to social justice. Peace and justice are interrelated and cannot be mutually exclusive. There is thus no longer any excuse to deny equitable representation in the major organs of the Organization and undemocratically to deprive States of the opportunity to participate in the making of decisions which will affect their destinies and the welfare of their peoples. The United Nations will be in danger of being marginalized if it does not take into account the needs and aspirations of most of its Members and does not build trust between its Members, big and small, rich and poor, weak and strong. It can build such trust and mutual confidence only if it makes sure that democratic norms and principles are accepted and practised by all its Members.

Thirdly, this is the age of decentralization. Whenever possible, therefore, the United Nations must create the appropriate modalities to enable regional organizations to assume tasks which they will be able to execute more effectively. To this end, the General Assembly must take the necessary steps to ensure a relevant role for regional and even subregional organizations, without losing its leadership role or eliminating its support.

Fourthly, the urgency of reform is recognized, but it would be counterproductive to rush into decisions whose implications we shall live to regret. Those who resent the veto power of the five permanent members of the Security Council would be well advised to take the time, and to allow others to take the necessary time, to study issues before they make final decisions on such weighty matters.

Since its independence in 1993, Eritrea has embarked on a course of nation-building, reconstruction and renewal. In this endeavour, we were inspired by the eternal ideas of our struggle, which enshrines justice, equity, human rights and equal opportunity to all, including, in particular, hitherto marginalized groups.

In the last six years — for we liberated our country two years prior to our declaration of formal independence — we have taken the necessary measures to establish a regime of peace and marked stability in a region of the world in which they have been absent for several decades; consolidate our profoundly democratic tradition of struggle by adopting a new constitution and holding our first democratic regional elections; create a development-oriented State and government structure;

ensure a corruption-free society; build schools and health facilities in most regions of our country; and formulate an economic and financial policy which fosters an environment that encourages investment and has thus made our country a new frontier of widely expanding opportunities. These policies have yielded good political, economic and social dividends that have enabled us to look to the future with hope and optimism.

In our foreign relations, we have been guided by two basic principles. The first is our deep conviction that, where there is goodwill, all can be resolved through peaceful negotiation without recourse to violence. A natural corollary of this belief is the firm conviction that all States, regardless of their ideological orientation, can live together in peace. This tenet underlies Eritrean foreign policy and has guided its relations with all the countries of the two regions — the Red Sea and the Horn of Africa — in which it is located.

This has enabled it to establish an exemplary, close tie of friendship with Ethiopia, our erstwhile adversary. These close relations and friendship have widely manifested themselves over the last four years as we have coordinated activities in the political, economic and social fields. It has also helped us to defuse conflict and to arrive at a mutual agreement to resolve the conflict between us and the Republic of Yemen over the Eritrean Hanish-Zukar archipelago on the Red Sea by the peaceful means of arbitration. The State of Eritrea has time and again affirmed its adherence to the Agreement of principles of 21 May 1996 and expressed its commitment to abide by the decisions of the Arbitration Tribunal. Since both parties have committed themselves to abide by the decision of the Arbitration Tribunal, my Government feels that the dispute is already solved.

Unfortunately, even the best of goodwill and intentions could not help avert bad relations with our other neighbour, the Sudan, which is bent on conducting a bad-neighbour policy, is at odds with almost all of its neighbours and with others beyond, and has, because of its avowed policy of exporting terrorism abroad, become an international pariah.

The second pillar of Eritrean foreign policy is an unswerving devotion to justice and equity. This policy emanates from Eritrea's subjection to the horrors of aggression and colonization at the height of the cold war. At that time, our pleas to the United Nations and the international community fell on deaf ears. Because of this, we are convinced that there are no substitutes for justice and equality for the purpose of ensuring the maintenance of peace in the world. These, too, have influenced our search for friendship and cooperation with our neighbours as well as with other States. They have also underlined our efforts to bring peace and stability to our region and to achieve an early end to the fratricidal conflict in Somalia, a just and fair resolution of the Sudanese conflict, and the development of economic, commercial and political relations among countries of the region.

The conflict that has ravaged the Sudan for about two decades must be brought to an end. The absence of peace in the Sudan has had severe consequences for most of its neighbours. Thus, they have a substantial interest in the restoration of lasting peace, security and stability in the Sudan.

To this end, those of its neighbours which are members of the Intergovernmental Authority on Development (IGAD) have, both collectively and individually, exerted much effort during the past seven years to promote an inter-Sudanese peace process. None of the members of IGAD has an interest other than ushering in peace in the Sudan. All have favoured and encouraged dialogue, compromise and tolerance. They were convinced that peace could be achieved on the basis of the Declaration of Principles formulated by IGAD after a serious assessment of the objective reality prevailing in the country. It is regrettable that until last month the Sudanese regime had done all it could to subvert the peace process it had willingly accepted. It has now accepted the Declaration of Principles. We hope it will respect its commitment and implement the provisions of that Declaration. If and when it does, it will bring our initiative to a successful conclusion and usher in peace and stability in the Sudan.

I also wish to refer to the efforts made by IGAD concerning the tragic situation which still exists in Somalia. It will be recalled that the members of IGAD have both collectively and individually expressed deep concern that this grave situation has continued for many years and that no workable solution has yet been found. Many attempts to bring the concerned parties to the negotiating table have failed. Where they have succeeded, no agreement could be achieved. Where agreements have been reached, they have been broken soon after.

In the global context, my country is fully convinced that international cooperation is of vital importance. To ensure sustainable development, Eritrea has been engaged in fostering regional integration and international

cooperation because it is firmly aware of the importance of partnership in development. Eritrea believes that partnership can be ensured only when independence of choice and recognition of equality and mutuality exist.

We in Eritrea are convinced that the world will benefit from a strong, purposeful and dynamic United Nations. We will therefore contribute, however modestly, to the creation of the conditions necessary to make it a real force which will ensure international peace and security that is broadly defined and premised on development.

We note with great interest and welcome the Secretary-General's proposals for reform. We are studying them with care. We fully endorse the values and principles underlying the objectives of reform, as enunciated in the Secretary-General's address to the current Assembly, particularly his reference to the new paradigms of cooperation.

Today, I assure the General Assembly of our commitment to the United Nations and to its new principles and purposes and its vision of a new world, as well as its sincere commitment to promoting genuine peace and development and defending the cause of small, weak States and vulnerable peoples. One would think that a nation like Eritrea — which had been systematically betrayed by the United Nations during the past four decades — would have second thoughts about committing itself to the Organization. However, we always believed that there was nothing wrong with the message of the United Nations, and we had subscribed to it even in our days of struggle. Surely we cannot blame the message for the shortsightedness of the messengers. We urge others who share our feelings to join us in giving the Organization the wholehearted support it now deserves and needs if it is going to be as effective as we wish it to be.

The President: I now call on the Minister for Foreign Affairs, Tourism and Information of Saint Vincent and the Grenadines, His Excellency the Honourable Alpian R. O. Allen.

Mr. Allen (Saint Vincent and the Grenadines): I wish to congratulate you, Mr. President, on your unanimous election. I am confident that under your leadership this session of the General Assembly is well placed to address the important issues on its agenda.

Commendation is due His Excellency Mr. Razali Ismail for the balanced and effective guidance he provided during the just concluded session.

My delegation takes this opportunity to offer heartfelt congratulations to our new Secretary-General, Mr. Kofi Annan, on his assumption of such a high and noble office. He will no doubt bring fresh insights to bear on the Herculean tasks and problems confronting the United Nations. We wish to indicate our support for his initiatives for reforming the United Nations.

In spite of the many achievements of the United Nations, much remains to be done. The world is still plagued by poverty, all manner of diseases — some even defying medical science — terrorism, regional conflict and the menace of drugs. There can be no real peace or security if millions of people go to bed hungry. There can be no comfort if the rich man turns his back on the poor man and treats him as a statistic. It seems as if the moral obligation to help the disadvantaged has been totally abandoned in some quarters.

Saint Vincent and the Grenadines remains a very peaceful country, with its cherished democratic institutions intact. Recently our judicial system, which is known historically for its integrity, was put under microscopic examination with a view to discrediting it. The test results reveal a clean bill of health. This painful period in our history has taught us many lessons. We know now that there are friends who will smile with us while plotting our execution. Today it is true to say that might is not right and that a small nation like ours can have the fortitude to withstand attacks even from those who may have the strength of Samson.

Our banana pains continue to intensify. The prognosis appears to be very bleak. The recent World Trade Organization (WTO) ruling has left us dazed and helpless. The concept of every man being his brother's keeper has been shattered.Can we survive? Will our cries for help go unheeded? What about our neighbours? Are they deaf or uncaring? I know it now. Money and greed have been elevated to the status of a religion, and care and concern are now regarded as a vice. Our future is now on a life-support system. However, I am confident that our resourcefulness and faith will see us through.

My delegation welcomes the idea of the establishment of a zone of peace in the Middle East. We call on all parties to take urgent and practical steps towards the establishment of such a zone in accordance with the relevant General Assembly resolutions adopted by consensus. We also call for a halt to the distribution and production of conventional weapons, which have caused immense suffering, especially in this century.

Recent acts of terrorism have given cause for great concern. Why should innocent people continue to perish? The United Nations Charter provides for the peaceful settlement of disputes. Both sides have rights which must be respected. Violence can never be a solution. Let us put reason before bloodshed.

We should not rush to write the obituary for the Middle East peace process. The wounds inflicted are not fatal; the haemorrhaging can be stopped and the process revived.

I look forward to the day when peace will break out in that ancient region, when men shall beat their swords into ploughshares and into pruning hooks their spears.

Our own hemisphere is not without problems. Our region believes in neighbourly love, and any attempt to inflict pain and unjustified hardship on any of us affects all of us. Those who exert pressure, be it economic or legal, will find no comfort in our bosom. The strategy of diplomatic isolation has failed. It is clear that in the new millennium, we cannot do business as usual. In hemispheric matters, muscular diplomacy should give way to moral suasion.

During this year both Suriname and Haiti have become full members of the Caribbean Community (CARICOM). We take this opportunity to welcome them once again. We also note the progress made since the reestablishment of democracy in Haiti, and we urge the international community to continue to offer technical, material and financial help. That will enable the people of that country to deepen the process of democracy and to promote the country's sustained economic and social development. I would like to take this opportunity to express my sympathy to the Government of Haiti in regard to the recent tragedy at sea.

In our region, nature has manifested its mighty force, and the people in Montserrat are now fleeing from an angry volcano that erupts periodically. Our hearts are with the people there, and we have done whatever we can to assist. Efforts to help are continuing at home even as I speak. Let us hope that the full extent of the plight of the people of Montserrat is realized by those who are in a position to make a substantial contribution. Now is the time to stand up and be counted.

My delegation welcomes the convening in 1998 of a special session of the United Nations General Assembly dedicated to the fight against the illicit production, sale, demand for and distribution of illicit drugs and psychotropic substances. Those who traffic in this trade can properly be regarded as merchants of death. International cooperation is the only way to combat this menace.

I wish at this time to pay tribute to a woman who has died recently and whose name evokes mystic reverence. Her legacy is one of compassion. I speak of Mother Teresa. She embraced the poor, the sick and the suffering, the favoured and the dispossessed. Her life shows that even in this cruel world there are still people who are willing to put others before themselves in unrewarded service. She lived her religion to the fullest. May she rest in peace.

It is our hope that the issue regarding Taiwan can be resolved peacefully. We urge those on both sides of the Taiwan Strait to hold discussions and negotiate a peaceful solution in the reunification process to which both sides are committed. We of Saint Vincent and the Grenadines are very grateful for the assistance we have received from Taiwan, and we would hope that the international community would respect its contribution to development and that it may find its place in the international community.

My delegation will continue to support the fundamental rights of all peoples to self-determination. We are heartened to see the emergence into sovereign statehood and independence of peoples once under colonial domination or foreign occupation. We reaffirm the inalienable right of peoples of Non-Self-Governing Territories to self-determination.

The reform and expansion of the Security Council is of paramount importance as we approach the dawn of a new millennium. My delegation wishes to emphasize that the ongoing discussions on the reform and expansion of the Security Council must take into account the principle of sovereign equality of States and equitable geographical distribution. There is also the need for transparency, accountability and democratization.

My delegation has no objection to the inclusion of additional developed countries on the Council as permanent members, but we fully support the proposal that all regions be represented in a permanent capacity, including Latin America and the Caribbean. The reform cannot be handled piecemeal. We will not support any change that does not include Latin America and the Caribbean Community.

Expansion of the Council must not and cannot be limited to permanent seats. It is necessary to increase the number of non-permanent seats to give more countries an opportunity to serve on the Council within a relatively shorter time-frame. In addition, we recommend that the regional non-permanent seats be rotated among the countries that are desirous of serving on the Council.

In this process we must remember and be guided by the word "democracy". If this body is to have the moral authority to restore or encourage democracy in some Member States, it must first become fully democratic.

Saint Vincent and the Grenadines remains a loyal and dedicated member of the United Nations committed to upholding the noble principles of the Charter. Now more than ever before we must reaffirm our collective respect for the fundamental principles of the Charter. The small nations of the world must receive constant reassurances from the larger nations that their interests will be safeguarded, their sovereignty respected.

When we speak of the United Nations, we must project our vision beyond this building. In the end it is our deeds that will count. Yes, it is what we do to the least of our brethren. Promises and statements have no meaning unless they can be translated into action. This body must never be perceived as a gathering of word merchants but, rather, as one of action-oriented men and women.

Our planet's resources are finite, and even the most economically developed States cannot pursue unilateral policies in isolation from the rest of the world.

We stand firm in the belief that the United Nations is still the best hope for the world. This hope must be grounded in action, in a firm resolve to act decisively in the best interests of this great institution — indeed in the interest of all humanity and untainted by the narrow national interests that have dogged our path during the last five decades.

The President: I now call on the Minister for Foreign Affairs and International Cooperation of Kenya, His Excellency the Honourable Stephen Kalonzo Musyoka.

Mr. Musyoka (Kenya): Allow me, at the outset, to convey to you, Sir, on behalf of my delegation, my warm congratulations on your election as the President of the fifty-second session of the United Nations General Assembly. I am confident that your work will meet with great success throughout the session, particularly in guiding us in the task of reforming and restructuring the United Nations in preparation for the challenges ahead.

I would like to pay tribute to your predecessor, Ambassador Razali Ismail, Permanent Representative of Malaysia, for the excellent manner in which he conducted our deliberations during the previous session.

I also take this opportunity to commend the Secretary-General, Mr. Kofi Annan, for his vision and devotion to the service of the United Nations.

The creation of the United Nations by the founding fathers was a courageous decision. Although their objectives are yet to be fully realized, Kenya is convinced that they are still valid, and we remain fully committed to their achievement. The world has undergone tremendous transformation since the signing of the United Nations Charter in San Francisco 52 years ago. We have witnessed the end of the East-West military and political rivalry, which at times crippled decision-making in the United Nations system. New opportunities have emerged and the role of the United Nations has diversified, with the international community placing greater expectations on the Organization.

Under the able leadership of His Excellency President Daniel T. arap Moi, Kenya has undertaken bold political and economic reforms whose benefits we are beginning to realize. We are committed and determined to continue forging national unity to enhance the process of democratization and socio-economic development.

It is against this background that I wish to address some of the issues contained in the agenda of this session.

In recapping the events of the past years, we note that the United Nations has made efforts to secure international peace and security. We regret that the peace dividend expected after the cold war has not materialized. Instead, the total volume of assistance to developing countries has declined, and the scourge of conflicts in various parts of the world, and in Africa in particular, has revealed the frightening proportions of ethnic and nationalistic hostilities and humanitarian crises. Intra-State conflicts have torn some of our nations apart, as they pose threats to security, social cohesion and economic progress.

Some of these conflicts have proved difficult to prevent, manage or resolve. They have caused diversion

of resources from developmental purposes to non-productive use. Kenya believes in the peaceful resolution of conflicts and encourages the settlement of disputes through negotiations, mediation, conciliation and arbitration as opposed to use of force. His Excellency President Daniel T. arap Moi, along with other leaders in Africa, has spent considerable time and resources coordinating peace initiatives in southern Sudan, Somalia, Burundi, Rwanda and the former Zaire, among other places.

We are happy to report that the stalled peace process concerning the conflict in southern Sudan was re-energized following the extraordinary Summit of the Intergovernmental Authority on Development (IGAD) held in Nairobi on 8 and 9 July 1997, at which the Sudanese Government accepted the Declaration of Principles, which calls on all factions to work together. In addition, during the IGAD Ministerial meeting held in Nairobi on 22 September 1997, the parties to the conflict agreed on 28 October 1997 as the date for the next meeting. Kenya believes that the parties must have the courage and political will to negotiate in good faith. It is equally important for the international community to actively support this process by making financial resources available as well as by exerting pressure on all the parties to rededicate themselves to finding a lasting solution to the conflict. We pay tribute to the IGAD Partnership Forum for its supportive role vis-à-vis the IGAD initiative.

The prolonged conflict in Somalia remains a matter of great concern to Kenya. The continued absence of that sisterly State among the family of nations is indeed regrettable. We maintain that reconciliation of the warring factions is critical to finding a just, lasting and comprehensive peace settlement to the conflict. The international community, in particular the Intergovernmental Authority on Development, the Organization of African Unity (OAU) and the United Nations, has an important role in assisting in the process of reconciliation.

The crisis in the Republic of Congo is similarly a matter of grave concern to Kenya. We are concerned that three months have elapsed since the President of Gabon, Omar Bongo, called upon the Security Council to deploy a United Nations force to assist in normalizing the situation in that country. We wish to reiterate the OAU position stated at the recent Security Council ministerial meeting -- namely, that there is a need for urgent intervention by the United Nations.

Likewise, the situation in Burundi is also of concern to my country. We support the efforts by Mwalimu Julius Nyerere to find a negotiated solution to the problem in that country. We urge President Pierre Buyoya to take into account the concerns of the subregion and the international community in general and work towards a negotiated settlement.

Kenya wishes to reiterate the position taken on the conflict in Sierra Leone by the thirty-third session of the OAU Conference of Heads of State and Government, held in Harare, Zimbabwe, in June 1997, that the international community desist from recognizing the military junta. We support the efforts by the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) in the search for a solution to the crisis in that country and urge the junta to return Sierra Leone to constitutional rule. We are convinced that quick and effective action by the international community is necessary, as underscored by President Tejan Kabbah during his intervention before the Assembly on 1 October last.

My Government is also concerned with the political developments in the Islamic Federal Republic of the Comoros. We support the efforts by the Organization of African Unity aimed at bringing the Government and other parties together with a view to seeking a solution to the problem. We urge the people of the Comoros to work towards maintaining the sovereignty, national unity and integrity of their country.

Kenya has been involved in the peace process in Angola since 1975. We are encouraged by the progress that has been made towards finding a peaceful solution to the prolonged crisis in that country. However, we wish to reiterate the need for both parties, in particular UNITA, to cooperate fully in the implementation of the Lusaka Protocol, the agreed framework for peace in Angola. At this point in time, any alternative will only hurt the people of Angola.

On a positive note, we are encouraged by the cooperation between the United Nations and ECOWAS that enabled Liberia to hold successful elections, won by President Taylor. In this regard, we commend the efforts of ECOWAS, the international community and the Liberian people for the manner in which the elections were concluded. We wish Liberia success in the difficult task of reconstruction and post-conflict peace-building.

Kenya believes that a continued United Nations presence and focused support of the international

community are critical in the rehabilitation and reconstruction of Liberia, including the repatriation and reintegration of refugees. We welcome the Secretary-General's intention to establish a peace-building support office in Monrovia upon the termination of the mandate of the United Nations Observer Mission in Liberia (UNOMIL). We are convinced that this will assist the new Government in its efforts to rebuild Liberia's economy and contribute towards the promotion of peace and stability in the region.

Kenya welcomes the recent movements towards the resumption of negotiations by the parties to the conflict in the Middle East. We wish to urge them to honour in good faith the Oslo agreements they have entered into and to refrain from activities that have the potential of undermining the peace process. There is a need for the Government of Israel and the Palestinian Authority to resume dialogue in order to resolve all outstanding issues. Kenya will continue to support the parties in their search for a just, durable and comprehensive peace.

We also welcome the Secretary-General's initiative in Cyprus and the efforts of the international community to bring the parties to the negotiating table. In this respect, we applaud the face-to-face intercommunal talks held in Switzerland on 11 August last. The world would like to see both the Greek and Turkish Cypriots resolve their problem of more than two decades. There is therefore a need to intensify efforts to find a durable solution to that problem. We call upon the international community to also support the talks by exerting pressure on both sides and to refrain from activities that might be seen as impeding the peace process.

The humanitarian emergencies accompanying these conflicts require an urgent response from the international community. Thousands of people are affected in one way or another. Refugees and displaced persons are experiencing varying degrees of suffering on a daily basis. While reiterating our support for the work of the Office of the High Commissioner for Refugees and of the international community, we feel that it is vital to enhance closer coordination and cooperation between all actors to facilitate the complementarity of efforts.

We are committed to the promotion of universal humanitarian principles and international humanitarian law. Kenya, indeed, has been host to thousands of refugees from our region. We have stretched our meagre resources to accommodate the refugees but regret that some of them have abused our hospitality and caused problems of insecurity in our own country. We urge the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees to work closely with the Government of Kenya in monitoring and verifying the genuineness of the refugees in order to address this problem.

Kenya and other African countries have contributed troops to various United Nations peacekeeping missions worldwide. We view the reluctance by the international community to support operations in Africa as a departure from the Charter responsibilities of the United Nations. We recognize that concerted efforts by the countries affected and others in the region are necessary in the settlement of conflicts. The involvement of regional organizations in the prevention, management and resolution of conflicts should therefore not entail any derogation of the responsibilities of the United Nations. We wish to reaffirm that the role of peacekeeping and peace enforcement throughout the world must remain the responsibility of the United Nations and in particular of the Security Council, in accordance with the Charter. In this respect, Africa expects to see swift handling of the conflict in the Congo (Brazzaville), in much the same way as was the case in the Balkans.

My country welcomes the results of the Oslo Diplomatic Conference on an International Total Ban on Anti-Personnel Landmines. This constitutes a significant contribution to the realization of ending the use of weapons that have wreaked havoc in many parts of the world. Kenya commends the international community for its efforts to bring to an end the use of these deadly weapons.

A prominent feature in recent years has been the increasing globalization of the world economy. Although the global economy continues to show modest growth, with the highest performance being experienced in East Asia, Africa's economy still lags behind. The continent remains highly vulnerable to adverse international economic policies and natural calamities due to its limited capacity to respond. The economy is characterized by poverty and underdevelopment. The per capita incomes are the lowest in the world, and most of the countries are unable to feed their growing population. At the same time, the marginalization of the continent continues, with unsustainable external debt being a major factor.

We welcome the measures taken by the international community at the bilateral and multilateral levels to mitigate the debt burden. It is evident, however, that Africa's indebtedness continues to be a major constraint

in the economic development of the continent despite efforts by many countries to implement economic reforms. These efforts have not met with adequate bilateral and multilateral financial support, resulting in limited prospects for economic growth. We underscore that the reduction or cancellation of both the bilateral and multilateral debt of the heavily indebted countries needs serious consideration. Kenya urges the international community to seriously address the external debt crisis.

In addition, we regret that the agreed official development assistance target of 0.7 per cent has not been met by most donor countries but has, as a matter of fact, declined to approximately 0.25 per cent. Hence, the implementation of the United Nations Agenda for Development should address all these issues and place Africa in its proper perspective. We appeal to the industrialized countries to reverse the declining trend in official development assistance and to honour their commitments by attaining the agreed target. Kenya believes that to achieve good results, development must be people-oriented and involve all actors, with emphasis on human resource development, application of science and technology, and the creation of employment and income-generating opportunities.

Africa has abundant human and natural resources, which, if properly harnessed, could generate wealth for the people of the continent. Kenya is committed to the promotion of South-South cooperation and urges that necessary measures be taken to ensure effective collaboration. In this regard, Kenya and other countries of the region are promoting regional cooperation in order to integrate our economies in the long run. We wish to appeal to our partners to complement these efforts by intensifying technical and financial support. We underscore that without social and economic progress it is difficult to achieve peace.

The liberalization of trade regimes and the promotion of an open and secure multilateral trading system are vital requirements for the acceleration of economic development. As a member of the World Trade Organization, Kenya is committed to the liberalization of both trade and investment regimes. In this regard, unilateral protectionist actions, which are inconsistent with multilateral trade agreements, should not be allowed to interfere with these arrangements.

Kenya is committed to the implementation of the outcomes of the various United Nations conferences, such as the Rio United Nations Conference on Environment and Development, the Cairo International Conference on Population and Development, the Copenhagen World Summit for Social Development, the Beijing Fourth World Conference on Women, the Istanbul United Nations Conference on Human Settlements (Habitat II) and the Rome World Food Summit, among others. We are disappointed that the outcome of these conferences has to a large extent remained unimplemented. In the course of implementing Agenda 21, my country has initiated innovative steps to protect and preserve the ecosystem. These include public awareness programmes, environmental education and the Great Rift Valley Conservancy Programme, which ensures integrated utilization of land. We urge the international community to honour their commitments by making available new and additional resources for the attainment of the intended objectives.

As the United Nations continues to introduce measures to ensure reduction of waste, it is imperative that the Organization ensure maximal and rational use of the existing facilities within the United Nations system. As host to the only United Nations headquarters in the developing world, we are concerned that the facilities at the Nairobi offices are underutilized. In this regard, Kenya wishes to see maximal utilization of the facilities available in Nairobi, the headquarters of the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) and of the United Nations Centre for Human Settlements (Habitat). We therefore wish to urge that General Assembly resolutions requiring meetings to be held at their respective headquarters should, to the extent possible, be adhered to.

We are further concerned that both UNEP and Habitat suffer from inadequate funding despite their enormous potential. We note that these two United Nations bodies need to be strengthened by streamlining their administrative and financial management. Above all, they require adequate and predictable financial resources from all sources in order to fulfil their mandates. In this context, we would like to request the Secretary-General to expedite the implementation of measures expected to revitalize the two institutions. In addition, we wish to appeal to the donor community to honour their financial commitments and release any blocked funds to enhance the effective operation of UNEP and Habitat. Kenya will continue to ensure that the United Nations offices in Nairobi operate in a smooth environment.

The challenges facing the Organization in the next millennium are many and complex. It is imperative that the Organization be restructured to enable it respond

adequately to new priorities and challenges. In this respect, we wish to commend the Secretary-General for unveiling reform measures and proposals that will form the basis of our discussion. We urge the Secretary-General to speedily implement measures within his mandate to reduce waste and ensure effective utilization of existing facilities and better coordination and cooperation within the United Nations.

Kenya is committed to the reform of the United Nations and will continue to participate actively in the debate. We expect that the reforms will be carried out with transparency, and in full compliance with the democratic principles and purposes of the Charter. In our view, the Organization requires not radical transformation but rather the strengthening and modification of its structures and organs to enhance its effectiveness.

In reforming the United Nations, it is of paramount importance for Member States to recognize that unpaid contributions constitute a major obstacle to the effectiveness of the Organization. We are concerned that the United Nations is facing a financial crisis which is due basically to Member States not honouring their Charter obligations. For the United Nations to fulfil its mandate effectively, there is need for stable, predictable and adequate financing. We therefore urge Member States to take concrete action to clear their arrears without conditionalities. Furthermore, adjustment of the scale of assessments ought to be the result of a collective decision to redistribute the financial burden while bearing in mind the principle of capacity to pay.

Kenya considers that the Security Council should be reformed to make it possible to achieve transparency, accountability, democratization and balanced regional representation. We reaffirm the position of the Organization of African Unity calling for the enlargement of the Council in both categories of membership to a total of 26 seats. We reiterate that Africa should be allocated at least two permanent and five non-permanent seats in the reformed Council.

We also support reforms in the economic and social fields which should enhance complementarity and better coordination of the activities of the Council. The Economic and Social Council should assume effective coordination of international policies and the activities of the specialized agencies. Further, it should ensure mobilization of resources for the operational activities which are critical for the achievement of socio-economic development. We are convinced that strengthening and revitalizing the functions of the Economic and Social Council will accelerate development, particularly in the areas of poverty alleviation, environment degradation, health and humanitarian assistance, among other areas.

I should like to conclude my statement by reaffirming Kenya's readiness to support measures that will strengthen the United Nations and turn it into a more focused and integrated Organization able to steer humanity into the next millennium. Let us all strive to make the Organization more effective in serving mankind in the years to come. We are determined to make our contribution.

The President: We have heard the last speaker in the general debate.

A number of delegations have asked to speak in exercise of the right of reply. I remind members that, in accordance with decision 34/401, statements in exercise of the right of reply shall be limited to 10 minutes for the first intervention and to five minutes for the second, and should be made by delegations from their seats.

Mr. Sarris (Greece): I have asked to speak in order to respond to a statement made by the Deputy Permanent Representative of Turkey last Friday, 3 October. It is regrettable that Turkey has chosen this debate to attack my country and introduce an element of strident confrontation at the present time, when the international community is conscientiously striving for bridge-building and peaceful cooperation in addressing the outstanding world issues. The Turkish Deputy Permanent Representative abused his right of reply in order to present Greece as a party at fault, by using doubletalk, distortion and misinformation.

I would like to refer to the statement my Minister for Foreign Affairs made to the Assembly in order to confirm that we remain committed to a positive approach in our relations with Turkey — without forgetting, however, that none of the problems we are facing are of our own making: because it is a fact and not propaganda that since 1974 Turkey has presented an open-ended agenda of claims that converge into the single objective of revising the status quo in the Aegean; that Greece has been under the pressure of systematic Turkish claims over our sovereign rights and responsibilities conferred by international agreements; that since January 1996 Greece has faced the aggressive manifestations of direct territorial claims, which our neighbour was prepared to back with military action; that Turkey, challenging

existing treaties after more than 70 years, has successively claimed the Imia islets as well as an undetermined number of islands in the Aegean, the island of Gavdhos, which is south-west of Crete, and unspecified "grey areas in the Aegean", "any island that is not specifically mentioned by name in a treaty", and "geographical formations whose status is not determined by international agreements".

In order to deny these facts, the Turkish Deputy Permanent Representative has distorted realities. Such a distortion is the Turkish representative's allegation that Greece ignores international law as far as its national airspace is concerned, although Turkey had respected from 1931 the delimitation of Greek airspace to 10 nautical miles.

Concurrently, Turkey has tried to dispute Greece's right to extend its territorial waters up to 12 nautical miles, a right stemming from international law as codified by the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea, and has repeatedly threatened that the exercise of this legitimate right would be a cause of war, thus violating Article 2 of the United Nations Charter.

Moreover, Turkey seeks to impose a status of defencelessness on the Aegean islands in order to have them at the mercy of the considerable military forces concentrated on the Turkish coast. The examples of the Cyprus invasion of 1974 and the repeated invasions of Iraqi soil by the Turkish army clearly convince us of the soundness of our decision to take all necessary measures in accordance with international law in order to prevent any new instances of such "peacemaking" by our neighbours.

The legal regime in the Aegean is clearly defined by international treaties, and especially by the 1923 Treaty of Lausanne. Boundaries exist there, either through international agreements or through provisions of international law. Turkey asserts that the whole range of arbitrary claims it has put forward concerning Greek sovereignty or sovereign rights in the Aegean should be "resolved through dialogue", a convenient code for negotiations without reference to the rules and principles of international law. Such a dialogue is unacceptable for any country, because it would legitimize claims that have no foundation in international law. One cannot conduct a dialogue with a neighbour that intends to acquire parts of one's sovereign territory.

Greece has proposed a step-by-step procedure destined to improve the state of relations with Turkey. The procedure provides for the reference by Turkey of its territorial claim over the islet of Imia to the International Court of Justice, for recourse by Greece and Turkey to the same international instance to resolve the outstanding issue of the delimitation of the continental shelf and for resumption of the dialogue previously conducted on a series of bilateral issues.

Contrary to my colleague's assertion, the Turkish attitude can hardly be considered constructive, positive or conciliatory. The repeated bellicose statements by Mr. Bulent Ecevit, Deputy Prime Minister, in the past few months, clearly illustrate the contrary. Nor can the statement by the former Turkish Prime Minister, Mr. Mesut Yilmaz, that "international law does not apply in the case of the Aegean".

Turkey has constantly rejected the realistic approach offered by successive Greek Governments after 1976 and up to 1995 by undermining all our efforts and proposals for the improvement and normalization of our relations.

The bottom line in Greek-Turkish relations is really very simple, as far as Greece is concerned. On our side, we have no claims or designs of any kind against Turkey. We have no demands of Turkey other than good-neighbourly relations based on respect for the principles of international law and treaties. We hope that Turkey will respond to this and channel its behaviour into accepted norms of conduct between neighbouring States. Such an attitude would have made the present exchange totally unnecessary.

Through our Madrid joint statement, by which we stand, it has been put to our neighbour to respect the existing overall framework of international law and treaties that has defined our borders and relations and has stood unchallenged for the last 70 years, and to desist from aggressive policies, refrain from territorial claims and submit to the jurisdiction of the International Court of Justice any argument it might deem valid concerning the islet of Imia.

We call again upon Turkey to submit to the general jurisdiction of the Court, as Greece has done, and to follow our realistic approach for clearing up the issues that shadow our relations, within the spirit prescribed by our Madrid statement.

Mr. Osman (Sudan) (*interpretation from Arabic*): In his statement today before this Assembly, the representative of the Eritrean regime made certain naive

and absurd accusations against my country, and I take the floor in order to exercise my right of reply.

At the outset I would like to make it clear that the target of this response is the Eritrean regime, which is immature, and not, in any case, the brotherly, gracious people of Eritrea, which has bonds of history, blood and common destiny with the people of the Sudan.

From this rostrum, I would like to emphasize that we have the greatest respect for the people of Eritrea, but the Eritrean regime is an instrument for destruction, murder and subversion in our region. Its policies are directed by a tyrant and an ingrate dictator, well known to the people of Eritrea and to the people of the Sudan as well. He shared the livelihood of the people of the Sudan in his darkest moments during the more than 20 years that he lived in the Sudan.

Unlike all the other neighbours of the Sudan who have spoken before this Assembly in support of the peace efforts under way in the Sudan, the last of whom was the Foreign Minister of Kenya, who only a few minutes ago and underscored the commitment of the Government of the Sudan to peace, only the representative of the Eritrean regime spoke of bad relations between the Sudan and its neighbouring countries.

The attempt by the Eritrean regime to attack my country is a crude way of obscuring the miserable and severe living conditions of the fraternal Eritrean people since the People's Front took control in that country. The representative of Eritrea spoke about issues that are an invention of his own sick imagination which is attracted by murder and destruction — a sick mind which is unable to comprehend bare facts. The Sudan, which hosted the head of the Eritrean regime for over 20 years — longer than he has lived in his own country — has a heritage, tradition, and morality which prevent it from pursuing policies of terrorism and the targeting of others.

It is common knowledge that many elements of the Eritrean leadership have been liquidated by the Eritrean regime. The President of the Eritrean regime knows better than anyone that the lists are quite long and are well known to the Eritrean people, in addition to that regime's terrorist adventures. Indeed, the regime's adventures have spread even in the past few months, beyond Eritrea's borders. Thus, the regime has liquidated elements opposed to it in neighbouring countries.

The Eritrean regime, which arrogated to itself the right to make false accusations against the Sudan, should instead have addressed the miseries it has brought upon the Eritrean people by its foolish policies. Those policies resulted in preventing hundreds of thousands of Eritrean refugees who are hosted by the Sudan from returning home; selectivity has become the hallmark of Eritrean policy regarding the return of refugees. This is a gross violation of all international norms that guarantee the basic and humanitarian rights of refugees.

Examples of the arbitrariness and intransigence of the Eritrean regime abound. We cite here the announcement by the Eritrean president at a forum in Asmara that the Eritrean army is in a state of war with the Sudan and that their objective is to bring down the Sudanese Government. He also said that the Eritrean regime's support for the Sudanese opposition to achieve this goal is without limits. When the Agence France Presse correspondent, Ruth Simon, reported that announcement she was arrested and detained by the Eritrean regime. These facts show the extent of the threat posed by the Eritrean President to international and regional peace and security.

The Eritrean regime flouted international treaties when it took the step, unprecedented in the history of international relations, of handing over the premises of the Sudanese Embassy to armed Sudanese opposition movements which are supported by the Eritrean regime. It also encouraged terrorists and hijackers by refusing to extradite those who hijacked a Sudanese civil aircraft and treating them as heroes — an action that was also in violation of international treaties.

Does the representative of a regime that declares war against a neighbouring State and publicly threatens to bring down its Government have the right to be among us as a Member of an international Organization whose first objective is to promote world peace and security? Does the representative of a regime that has accused this international Organization, as he did in his statement today, of betraying his country have the right to talk about peace in the Sudan?

The clearest answer is provided by the fact that this regime expelled from its territory the personnel of the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, thereby insulting them. That is yet another clear example of how the Eritrean regime does not respect international treaties and laws which regulate asylum and the status of refugees. The adventures of the

Eritrean regime and its dictator President, which demonstrate lack of maturity and responsibility, are not secrets to be divulged. Their actions are but a noisy coverup for invading neighbouring countries, violating their territorial integrity, sovereignty and territorial waters. Such acts show no respect for other African States, deriding them on their soil, as was done when Eritrea attended a meeting of the Organization of African Unity for the first time as an independent State.

In conclusion, we do not intend to waste the Assembly's time by responding to the attacks of the irresponsible Eritrean regime. We do not wish to encumber the time of this session devoted to the reform of the Organization. However, we have been forced to respond by the false accusations made by the representative of the Eritrean regime, which does not appreciate the value of the international Organization and its reform. We would like to underscore the fact that the whole world is well aware of the burdens shouldered by the Sudan for over 30 years in support of the cause of the Eritrean people. We are not boasting of this to the people of Eritrea because we owed these efforts to them but we want to emphasize here the inferiority complexes which grip the sick mind of the leadership of the Eritrean regime, which displayed a sense of ingratitude by invading the territory of the Sudan, assaulting it with tanks, and planting landmines inside our territory, thus terrorizing innocent citizens. These are the citizens who hosted that regime and shared with it their resources for over three decades.

The President: I would like to remind members that the time limit for the second intervention is five minutes. This applies to the next speaker, the representative of Turkey.

Mr. Tanç (Turkey): The response of the representative of Greece to the questions in my statement in right of reply did not provide any answers clarifying the position of Greece with regard to international law or to Greece's selective approach to its implementation. Greece does not seem to be ready to explain its double standards with respect to its national airspace and sea space in the Aegean, to the demilitarized status of the eastern Aegean islands or, finally, to the modalities of resolving the existing territorial disputes in the Aegean Sea.

We asked how Greece could explain its militarization of the eastern Aegean islands in violation of international treaties, and the inconsistency in claiming different airspace and sea space in contravention of the relevant Chicago Convention.

The representative of Greece also referred to Turkey's territorial claims on Greece. We would like to stress that in each and every case at issue between Turkey and Greece it can easily be seen that it is a Greek claim to which Turkey has responded. In this respect, I would like to refer to the programme of the former Greek Government which establishes a zone of areas of Greek domination, including northern Epir, Macedonia, Thrace, the Aegean region of Turkey, the eastern Mediterranean and Cyprus. It is these expansionist policies to which Turkey has been forced to respond.

In a letter addressed to the Secretary-General of the United Nations in 1995 we asked whether Greece was ready to announce that it did not harbour any territorial ambitions with regard to the "lost homelands" to which they refer in their programme. I am happy to hear that there is movement in that direction.

With regard to the statement of the Greek Foreign Minister claiming that Greece has 3,000 islands in the Aegean, Greece should remember that in the Aegean only the islands to which sovereignty was explicitly transferred by international treaties belong to Greece. The Aegean Sea as a whole has never belonged to Greece. There are two countries — Turkey and Greece — on the two sides of that Sea. When one country threatens to extend its territorial seas up to 12 miles, in effect wanting to acquire 70 per cent of that Sea and cutting off the lifeline of the other coastal State to international waters, it is an infringement of the rights of that coastal State. Greece's rights in the Aegean end where Turkey's rights begin. It is not Turkey which is advancing any claims in the Aegean Sea; it is only responding to the threat that Greece is advancing to extend its waters up to 12 miles, thereby cutting off international waters to Turkey.

The misrepresentation of facts on the Greek side is most striking and alarming when it comes to the issue of Cyprus, which also took up a large part of the statement of the Greek Foreign Minister. Greece would like third parties to believe that the question of Cyprus began in 1974, when in response to the Greek attempt to annex the island to Greece, Turkey, on the basis of the 1960 Treaty of Guarantee, exercised its right to intervene to prevent Greece's annexation of Cyprus. If the Cyprus issue began in 1974, how can Greece explain why the United Nations Peacekeeping Force in Cyprus was deployed in the island in 1964, 33 years ago and 10 years before Turkey was forced to intervene in order to protect the Turkish Cypriots from Greek Cypriot aggression?

I need only quote from Archbishop Makarios, the Greek Cypriot leader, who spoke in the Security Council on 19 July, immediately following the Greek coup. It is a long statement, elaborating on the invasion by Greece, and so as not to take up the time of the Assembly I am going to read only one of the last sentences of the statement. Archbishop Makarios said:

> "The coup of the Greek junta is an invasion, and from its consequences the whole people of Cyprus suffers, both Greeks and Turks." [*S/PV.1780, para. 32*]

In conclusion, I would like to say that no progress in Cyprus can be achieved by mixing priorities. The objective should be first to find a just solution to the Cyprus problem, and not to create faits accomplis. In Cyprus the important requirement is to base a solution on realities. It is necessary to be sincere, realistic, constructive and creative, and not to confuse wishful thinking with the facts.

Mr. Sarris (Greece): What the Deputy Permanent Representative of Turkey has just said is a repetition of what he said last year on this issue. I do not intend to reply again to statements made last year.

I would merely add this: It is Turkey, not Greece, that consistently undermines international law and the United Nations Charter by flagrantly violating their most fundamental principles — that is, by its application of a traditional foreign policy of aggression, invasion and military occupation towards neighbouring countries; by its custom of threatening the use of force and war; by its continuous promotion of territorial and other expansionist claims; and last, but not least, by its complete disregard for its international commitments with regard to respect for human rights, including minority rights.

And now Turkey insults the General Assembly — thereby adding insult to injury — by insisting on distorting the truth through the same false and unsubstantiated allegations. I do not consider these allegations worthy of further discussion in this body.

Mr. Moushoutas (Cyprus): In the 23 years of Turkish invasion and occupation of Cyprus, Turkey has been consistently attempting either to eclipse itself from the scene of the crime of aggression or to cloud the issues of what is known as the "Question of Cyprus".

The representative of Greece very aptly described Turkey's behaviour as double talk and distortion. I agree with him.

Even though differences exist between the Greek Cypriot and the Turkish Cypriot communities, especially from the constitutional standpoint, the gist of the problem is not these intercommunal differences but Turkey's act of aggression and continuing occupation of 37 per cent of the territory of Cyprus, the uprooting of 200,000 people from their ancestral homes and lands, the importation of settlers from mainland Turkey into Cyprus so as to change the demographic structure of the island, and the ongoing gross violation of human rights and fundamental freedoms of all Cypriots — Greek Cypriots and Turkish Cypriots alike.

The problem is not about defence expenditures, despite what we have just heard, or about the right of self-defence. After all, under Article 51 of the Charter, States are given the right — indeed they have the duty — of self-defence.

Nor is the problem of Cyprus its Government's application to join the European Union. As we have stated before, Cyprus is neither a colony nor a province of Turkey. It is ludicrous for Turkey to assume it can decide who will and who will not apply for membership in the European Union. And yet, under this ridiculous pretext, Turkey declared the integration and annexation of the occupied part of Cyprus to mainland Turkey — evidence of Ankara's erratic foreign policy, as it was described in the *Wall Street Journal*.

As I have stated, the grave issue facing the United Nations and the Assembly is the Turkish act of aggression compounded by the non-implementation and outright contentious disregarding of solemn Security Council and General Assembly resolutions and decisions. These resolutions demand the withdrawal of the occupation troops, the return of the refugees to their homes and lands, and respect for the human rights of all Cypriots.

Ironically, Turkey voted in favour of the unanimously adopted General Assembly resolution 32/2 (XXIX), which was endorsed by Security Council resolution 365 (1974), and thus rendered mandatory.

General Assembly resolution 37/253 again demands the withdrawal of all occupation troops, affirms the right and the sovereignty of the Republic of Cyprus over the

whole of its territory, and calls on Member States to assist the Republic to exercise these rights. In order to frustrate the implementation of the provisions of this resolution and to disappear from the scene of the crime, Turkey purported to establish an entity in the occupied areas of Cyprus; it did that as a shield against world condemnation. This entity was declared legally invalid by Security Council resolution 541 (1983), which demands Turkey's withdrawal and calls on the international community not to recognize or in any way to assist this secessionist entity. The provisions of Security Council resolution 541 (1983) were reaffirmed by Security Council resolution 550 (1984) and reiterated in many subsequent resolutions.

For the Turkish representative to speak about treaties and to claim that Turkey has followed the provisions of the Treaty of Guarantee is absolutely unacceptable in the light of the fact that this very Assembly described the presence of the troops there as occupation troops and asked for their withdrawal.

The reason for the lack of progress in finding a solution to the problem of Cyprus in accordance with the report of the Secretary-General in 1994 is the lack of political will on the part of Turkey, which is evidenced by its refusal to withdraw its troops from Cyprus. General Assembly resolution 37/253 very accurately states that the withdrawal of the occupation forces from the Republic of Cyprus is an essential basis for a speedy and mutually acceptable solution to the problem of Cyprus.

The Treaty of Guarantee could not have given Turkey the right to use military force because that would have been contrary to Article 2, paragraph 4, of the Charter — and the demands of the Charter are superior to any treaty.

The President: The general debate at the fifty-second session of the General Assembly has come to an end. Before declaring it closed, I would like to make some concluding remarks. This is not a summary of the debate since it is neither my task nor my responsibility to do that.

It is my conviction that the General Assembly debate has proved once again the unique and important role of the General Assembly within our Organization. In the course of the general debate the major global issues facing the world community today were addressed at the highest political level. We had the privilege of hearing statements by 176 speakers. Among them were 18 Heads of State, one Crown Prince, 14 Prime Ministers, 16 Deputy Prime Ministers and Foreign Ministers, 111 Ministers for Foreign Affairs, four other Ministers, and 12 Heads of Delegations.

Providing statistics at the end of the general debate has become a long-standing tradition, but I would urge us not to dismiss those numbers as mere "facts for the record", but, instead, to look at them as vivid testimony to the universal character of our Organization. And as for those critics who tend to view the general debate as simply an occasion for generalized statements, I think the past two weeks have shown Member States engaged in an eloquent, vigorous, focused and thought-provoking discussion on issues of global significance.

Can we do even better? No question about it, and it is therefore not surprising that many speakers emphasized the need to strengthen the role of the General Assembly and to streamline its procedures. We should spare no effort to make sure that the General Assembly, as a unique world parliament, conducts its business in the most efficient, pragmatic and productive manner. Now, in that context, the general debate performs many important functions and one of the key ones among them, I think, is that of an accurate barometer of world opinion, especially as it pertains to the United Nations. If we look at the past 12 days from that angle, I believe we would be justified in concluding that the barometer is pointing towards "good weather".

We all recall, however, that only a couple of years ago — ironically on the eve of the Organization's golden anniversary — there were ominous clouds of disappointment and disillusionment on the horizon. As the Organization came under a barrage of harsh and often destructive criticism from different quarters, there was a sense of uncertainty and doubt about the Organization's ability to change and to adapt itself to a post-cold-war world. True, there was no shortage of appeals for reform; but, in the absence of a realistic blueprint, the gap between exhortations and practical deeds seemed to be hard to bridge.

After listening carefully to the statements during the debate, I am convinced that the discussion has reflected a major change in perceptions and attitudes. I think that on the issue of reform we have made a crucial step from the quicksands of the doubtful to the firm grounds of the possible.

Virtually every speaker addressed the issue of reform and commented on the report of the Secretary-General (A/51/950), which contains a concrete programme for renewing the United Nations. It was one of the major themes during the general debate. In this respect, it would be fair to state that the efforts

undertaken by the Secretary-General to reform the United Nations has obtained strong political support. Practically all delegations welcomed the comprehensive reform package of the Secretary-General and most supported its endorsement in principle.

Delegations emphasized the comprehensive nature of the reform package. There was also a broad focus on the Secretary-General's efforts to transform the leadership and management structure of the Organization. It was recognized that we need to ensure that reform is undertaken as a concerted effort to redesign and strengthen this Organization for the task it would be expected to perform in the period ahead, rather than merely as a cost-cutting exercise. At the same time, a number of speakers referred to the fact that certain reform proposals would require further consideration. The importance of reflecting the needs and aspirations of all Member States was stressed, as was the need for consensus and full participation.

The focus placed by Member States on the question of United Nations reform during the general debate, both in a general and in a detailed fashion, emphasizes that delegations recognized the need for expeditious action on the issue. This debate has made it clear that Member States want to move rapidly to provide the Secretary-General with the mandate and the direction he requires to move ahead with his reform programme.

It is very important not to lose the momentum and to translate the high level of political will and commitment demonstrated during the general debate in favour of the proposed programme of reform into prompt concrete actions by the General Assembly.

There is a clear awareness of the critical moment the United Nations has reached. We can succeed in our joint efforts to build up a more effective and more viable Organization and to make it better prepared for the new millennium. To attain this goal, we should be guided by reason, tolerance and determination.

The reform process of the United Nations will be incomplete if it does not embrace the Security Council. The general debate has reaffirmed the broad agreement that the reform of this organ is of great importance for its functioning and legitimacy. In this respect, views were focused on the enlargement of the membership of the Council, taking into account equitable representation, new realities and the interests of various regions. It was also felt by many that there is a need to democratize the Security Council and to increase the transparency of its procedures and working methods.

There is also a broad understanding that the reform of the Security Council is a key issue for the United Nations that demands a well thought out and well-balanced decision.

The urgent need to put the United Nations on a sound financial footing has been identified by Member States as a prerequisite for the successful reform and functioning of the Organization. The theme of continuing financial difficulties facing the United Nations was a clear pessimistic undertone in the general debate. I have noted strong appeals to those who are in arrears to fulfil their legal obligations and to pay outstanding dues to the Organization. At the same time, it was pointed out that the time has come to adopt a new scale of assessments, based on agreed principles, which would reflect the capacity of Member States to pay. The reform process will be substantially facilitated if we reach a consensus decision on this very important issue this year.

It is very important that at this period of renewal and change, the United Nations received the full confidence of Member States during the general debate, which reaffirmed its essential goals: maintaining international peace and security, enhancing cooperation for development, strengthening the role of international law, promoting and encouraging respect for human rights, and providing humanitarian assistance.

The general debate has demonstrated that the international community continues to concentrate its efforts on the resolution of the most acute problems facing humankind. The concern of the Member States remained focused on areas of instability. The conflicts in the Middle East and in the Great Lakes region of Africa, in Central Asia and in the Balkans were particularly disturbing. The internationalization of problems such as terrorism, drug trafficking, money laundering and corruption, illicit arms trading and environmental pollution was also placed at the centre of the debate.

The debate justifies the conclusion that an adequate response to these and other issues is to be delivered through a continuing process of negotiations; a resolute policy of disarmament, both of weapons of mass destruction and of conventional weapons; the promotion of sustainable development; the further strengthening of human rights machinery; and the gradual reorientation of

the United Nations peacekeeping activities toward preventive diplomacy.

In the political area, a clear trend has emerged towards focusing on prevention rather than on peacemaking and peace enforcement. The emphasis was put on the preventive presence of troops or their rapid deployment to avoid an escalation of hostilities as well as on post-conflict peace-building as a way of preventing the recurrence of crises in the future.

The promotion of economic and social progress, the eradication of poverty, ways to ensure the widest possible participation in an expanding world economy, and regional integration and cooperation justifiably occupied a predominant place in the general debate.

It was clearly stressed that the process of globalization, which is now bringing both opportunities and dangers to Member States, should lead to an increasingly integrated approach to development and benefit all nations. The barriers that are still maintained in order to hamper access to foreign markets and the discriminatory and protectionist practices in international trade must be eliminated in order to bring a vision of global free trade to reality.

Achieving sustained growth and sustainable development must remain a major global objective. There are persistent problems, such as lack of safe water, threats to biological diversity, ozone loss, global warming, declining land productivity and desertification. Sustained growth is essential to the economic and social development of all countries. Its promotion will improve the standards of living through the eradication of poverty, hunger and illiteracy.

The general debate has also witnessed support for encouraging human rights, democratization and good governance, as well as the advancement of women and protection of the rights of children and persons belonging to minorities. The need to strengthen the capacity of the United Nations in these fields has been stressed by many speakers. It is therefore our responsibility to protect the philosophy of the Charter of the United Nations and further develop the role of this Organization in the economic and social spheres.

It is also our responsibility not to lose the spirit of cooperation and commitment at the high political level that has been demonstrated in the general debate. We should direct our future work in the plenary and the Main Committees in such a way as to embody them in the decision-making process. At present, this Organization depends to a decisive extent on what we are saying or doing. It is in our hands to agree on what kind of United Nations we wish to have in the future.

In conclusion, I would like to thank the representatives of all Member States who participated in the general debate for their cooperation and support of this presidency. This cooperation allowed us to begin plenary meetings punctually and to conclude the general debate on time. We managed to achieve the maximum use of conference-servicing facilities as well as national savings for this Organization, a goal to which we must continually subscribe. I will continue to count on Members' cooperation for the remainder of the session so that we may be able to conclude our work at the prescribed time.

I am also pleased to indicate that, during the past three weeks, I have noticed that more women delegates have been participating in our deliberations. This has given a more gender-balanced representation to our meetings.

May I take it that it is the wish of the General Assembly to conclude its consideration of agenda item 9?

It was so decided.

Announcement

The President: I should like to inform representatives that, in connection with agenda item 157, entitled "United Nations reform: measures and proposals", an informal list of measures and proposals summarizing the principal actions and recommendations contained in the report of the Secretary-General has been prepared by the Secretariat. This informal list is available in English only and has just been distributed in the General Assembly Hall.

I would like again to emphasize that this is an informal document and therefore is available in English only.

The meeting rose at 5.55 p.m.

United Nations A/52/PV.29

General Assembly

Fifty-second Session

Official Records

29th plenary meeting
Wednesday, 8 October 1997, 3 p.m.
New York

President: Mr. Udovenko ..... (Ukraine)

The meeting was called to order at 3:25 p.m.

Agenda item 120 (*continued*)

Scale of assessments for the apportionment of the expenses of the United Nations (A/52/350/Add.3)

The President: In a letter contained in document A/52/350/Add.3, the Secretary-General informs the President of the General Assembly that, since the issuance of his communications dated 16 and 29 September and 6 October 1997, Equatorial Guinea has made the necessary payment to reduce its arrears below the amount specified in Article 19 of the Charter.

May I take it that the General Assembly duly takes note of this information?

It was so decided.

Agenda item 157

United Nations reform: measures and proposals:

Report of the Secretary-General (A/51/950)

Conference room papers (A/52/CRP.1 and 2)

The President: May I draw the attention of delegates to the fact that, on the recommendation of the General Committee, the General Assembly decided to consider agenda item 157 directly in plenary meeting.

In connection with this item, members will recall that the report of the Secretary-General entitled "Renewing the United Nations: A Programme for Reform" has been issued as document A/51/950.

The Assembly also has before it two conference room papers prepared by the Secretariat: A/52/CRP.1, entitled "Establishment of the post of Deputy Secretary-General", and A/52/CRP.2, entitled "Rationalization of the subsidiary machinery of the Economic and Social Council".

I should like to recall that an informal list of measures and proposals summarizing the principal actions and recommendations contained in the report of the Secretary-General, also prepared by the Secretariat, was made available yesterday and is being distributed today in this Conference Room. Therefore, we have three additional documents prepared by the Secretariat.

During the past three weeks, I have carried out extensive consultations on the procedure to be followed to consider the reform proposals submitted by the Secretary-General. It is my understanding that the proposal to consider the item on United Nations reform at informal meetings reflects the preference of the members of the General Assembly. I therefore suggest that, under the chairmanship of the President, and with the assistance of the Vice-Presidents, open-ended informal consultations of the plenary should be held to facilitate the consideration of the reform proposals.

97-86188 (E)

This record contains the original text of speeches delivered in English and interpretations of speeches delivered in the other languages. Corrections should be submitted to original speeches only. They should be incorporated in a copy of the record and be sent under the signature of a member of the delegation concerned, *within one month of the date of the meeting*, to the Chief of the Verbatim Reporting Service, Room C-178. Corrections will be issued after the end of the session in a consolidated corrigendum.

In the absence of any objection, may I take it that the General Assembly agrees to continue its consideration of agenda item 157 in open-ended informal consultations of the plenary?

It was so decided.

The President: I should like to further propose that, in order to proceed expeditiously with the consideration of this item, the first meeting of the open-ended informal consultations of the plenary be held in this room immediately after the adjournment of this meeting.

I see no objection. We shall therefore proceed accordingly.

The meeting rose at 3:30 p.m.